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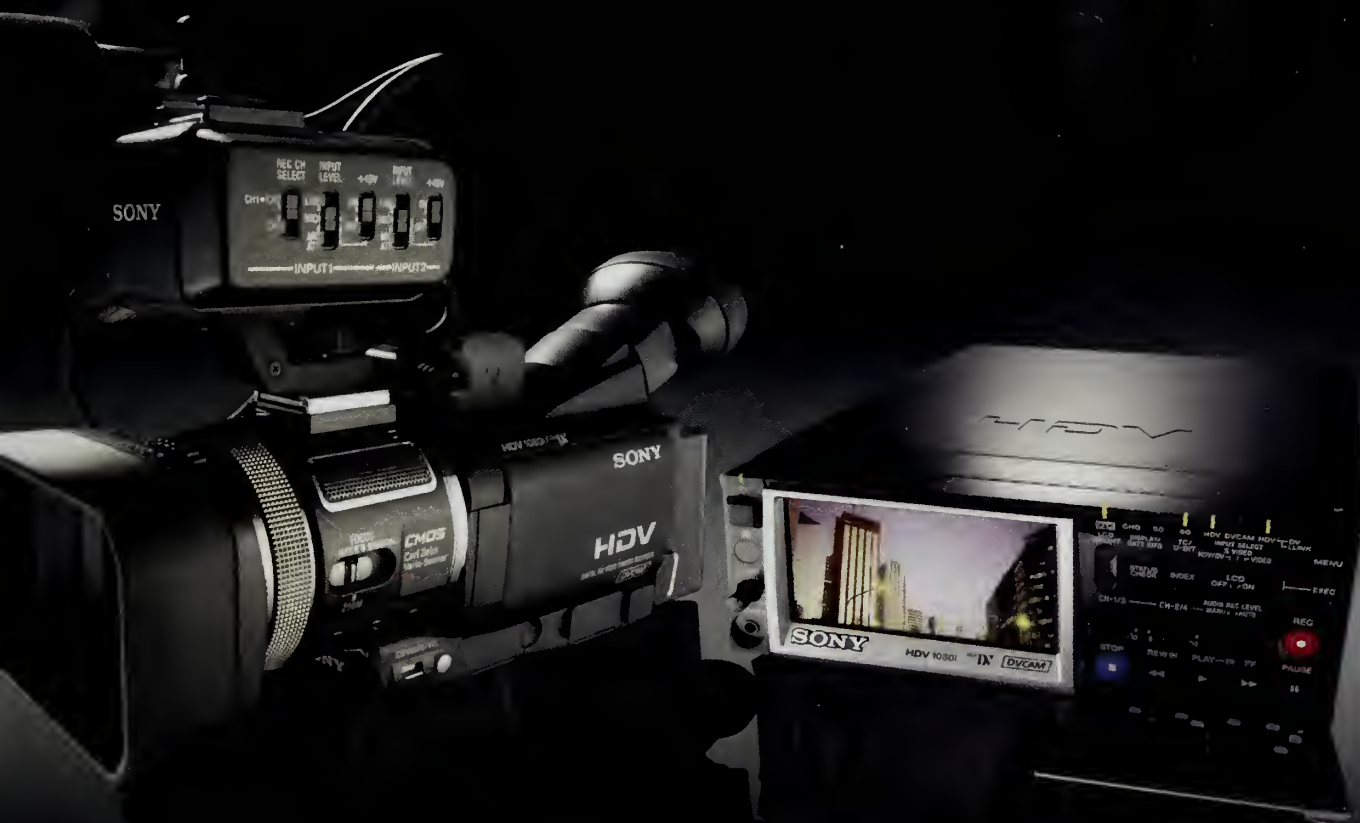
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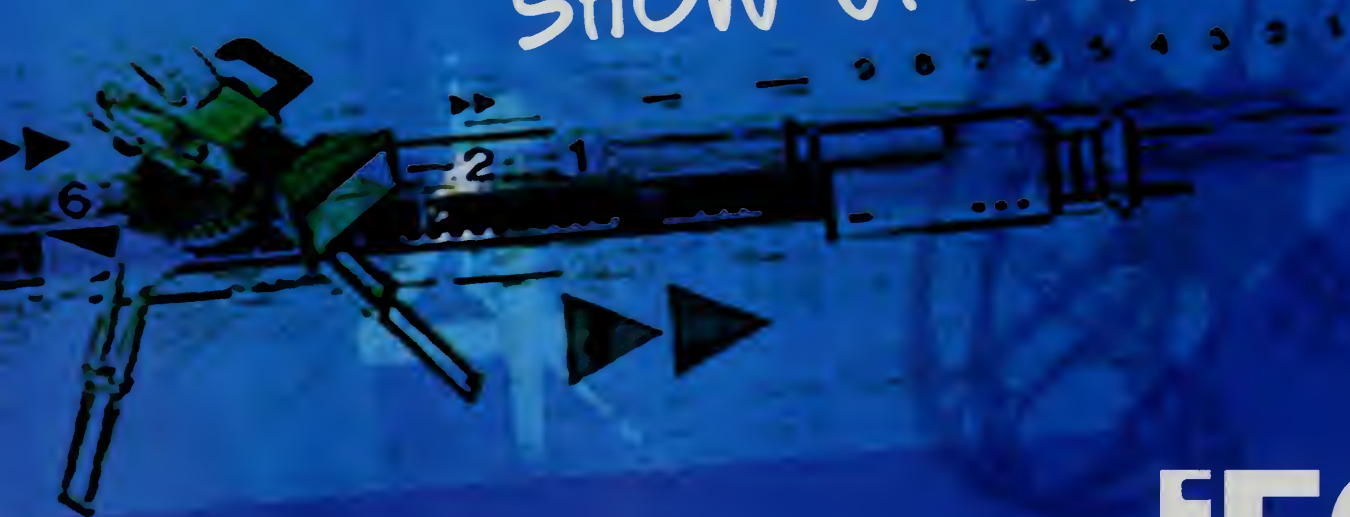
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Rebecca Carroll [Editor-in-Chief]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

This issue is kind of a mixed bag. I'd meant for it to be about shorts, and there is one fine piece here that falls under that rubric—about the smart, dedicated folks who program the shorts at Sundance each year, “The Short Story at Sundance” by Nick Schager (pg 36). But for the most part, because this is my last issue and I allowed myself a little creative indulgence (OK, more so than usual), I ended up going a bit flippy-floppy with the content.

I decided to run a piece on the MacDowell artists' colony, because as both a writer who has benefited from artist and writer residency programs and a New Hampshire native (where the MacDowell colony is located), it provides a great opportunity to introduce filmmakers to a really valuable alternative (to begging and borrowing from your parents or going into credit card debt) in a very beautiful place (what New Hampshire lacks in diversity it makes up for in its scenic splendor). So *The Independent's* associate editor, Katherine Dykstra, went to work and delivered the goods (pg 40).

I'm always interested and amazed by people and organizations that mean well and do well. WITNESS is one such organization, and there was no one better to write about them than regular contributor Elizabeth Angell, who has managed to consistently deliver pitch-perfect, generous, and literary work with each piece I've assigned her over the past two years.

Her story on WITNESS is clearly no exception, as evidenced through the passion and candor she elicited from the organization's program manager, Sam Gregory: “We stress that you are not making a video about an issue, but rather for a purpose, for an audience. You want to persuade and shame and move that audience.” (pg 36)

Also in this issue: a review of a timely and interesting book, *The Mind of the Modern Filmmaker*, by Josh Horowitz; our policy columnist Matt Dunne on broadband; Asian American organization NAATA turns 25 and celebrates by changing its name; and *Heeb* magazine's Editor-in-Chief and Publisher Joshua Neuman offers a poignant and unsentimental account of his experience documenting the life and death of his younger brother.

There are lots of things I will miss about this job, but more than anything else I will miss my staff (all five of them), and especially Shana Liebman, who I am happy to report will succeed me this month as editor-in-chief. Shana and I enjoyed that rare working relationship in which we could pretty much communicate without really saying anything—a shared sensibility, sense of humor, and work ethic made the challenge and grind of getting this magazine out each month if not always a complete joy, at least well worth it.

I put a lot of heart into this magazine, and I'm indebted to you, the readers, for appreciating my vision, and for keeping me on my toes.

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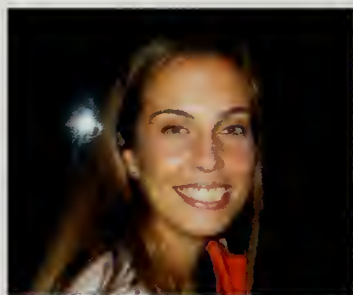


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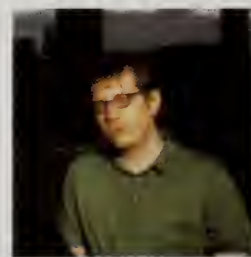


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TORS

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NEWS

Best Practices for Fair Use

A new report from
The Center for Social Media

By Fiona Ng



Pat Aufderheide, a professor and the director of the Center for Social Media at American University [photo courtesy American University]

The “Documentary Filmmakers’ Statement of Best Practices on Fair Use” was released by The Center for Social Media last November, with the intention of providing clear and set guidelines to the controversial issue of “fair use” in documentary filmmaking. Drawn up by five film and media organizations (among them, this magazine’s parent organization, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers), the statement takes on the semantic fuzziness of fair use by outlining four different non-exhaustive but commonly occurring conditions in which it could be justifiably applied.

Amorphous and highly subjective, fair use is the part of copyright law that allows documentary filmmakers to cite, quote, or use copyrighted material without clearance for specific purposes. Because there are no hard and fast rules on what qualifies as fair use, the problem, says Pat Aufderheide, a professor and the director of the Center for social media at American University, is that many filmmakers are either uninformed or discouraged from using it. “Everyday journalists use fair use and don’t think about it, everyday historians use fair use and don’t think about it,” says Aufderheide, who co-spearheaded the project with American University law professor Peter Jaszi. “Documentarians have not really realized it’s their right, because everyone’s been telling them it’s dangerous to use this right.”

The impetus for the statement stemmed from a 2004 study Aufderheide and Jaszi conducted called “Untold Stories,” which detailed how rights clearance issues impede free speech in documentary film work. What also emerged from these findings was that fair use was largely an obscure notion to many filmmakers.

For the next year, Aufderheide and Jaszi began to work on a set of standards for its application by tapping into the experiences of documentarians from the participating organizations. The deliberation process took place over more than 10 meetings, characterized by an air of conscientiousness. “The [filmmakers] want to ensure their own work is not exploited, so they have chosen to be extremely conscious in what they believe to be best practices. They were really remarkably in consensus, and we heard the same thing everywhere we went,” Aufderheide says. “The thing that most impressed me is the deep concern to maintain integrity of this use all the way through. People were terribly worried that they would abuse it and exploit it. And they weren’t just worried that someone might exploit their material, but they have a profound sense what fair is.”

The next step, Aufderheide says, is dissemination: passing the word to films, programmers, and insurers, while developing more educational material. Part of the plan also includes establishing a network of legal clinics across the country

able to answer questions about fair use.

One person that knows a thing or two about exercising this right is Brave New Films’ Jim Gilliam, who co-produced *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism* (2004) with director-producer Robert Greenwald. The exposé is among the best-known recent examples of fair use in a documentary, having drawn media and public attention (and the vitriol of Bill O’Reilly) to the use of Fox news footage in lambasting the channel for its Right-leaning agenda.

Gilliam said that they were deliberate in using the Fox videos as fair use. Using the master’s tools to bring down the master’s house, so to speak. “For us, it was a lot about trying to make sure we didn’t claim fair use for something that wasn’t airtight. We wanted to keep it for [the] very specific stuff [about which] we were being critical of Fox for, as a sort of slam dunk,” he says, adding that they did also try to clear as much footage as possible for all their films.

Although Gilliam felt confident about his fair use implementation, he also said that if need be, he and his team were prepared to go to court to defend it. Surprisingly, Fox didn’t sue. “By them not [suing us], it did set a precedent in a way. Maybe not a legal precedent, but look, if you use news footage to criticize someone, something that they would never give you permission to use, in the most severe case, fair use gives you the power to challenge

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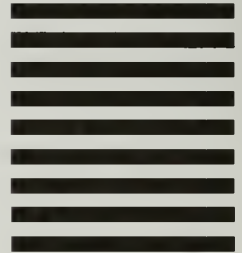
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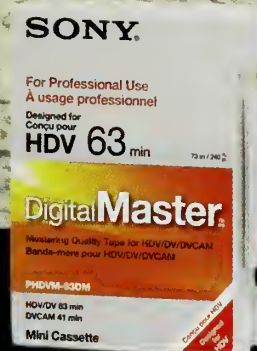
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the powers that be," Gilliam says.

But before that challenge can happen, filmmakers must get the go-ahead from their legal people. "What it comes down to is what your lawyers are going to let you use. Would insurance [companies] let you release a film with footage you didn't clear? That's where it hits the rope," says Gilliam.

Risk assessment, says Joy Butler, an entertainment and business attorney in Washington DC who specializes in clearance rights for independent film and music, is exactly what filmmakers should consider before they claim a usage is fair. Butler's book, *The Permission Seeker's Guide Through the Legal Jungle*, focuses almost entirely on this issue. "[I]f you are using copyrighted material, there is always some level of risk. You have to evaluate if you want to take that risk," Butler says. These risks include being sued and losing, in which case the defendants either have to pay monetary damages or pull their films from distribution. In the end, only a judge can decide whether fair use is in proper practice. Still, Butler applauds the release of the Center's statement. "I believe it's a good effort to draft something like that. It

is not conclusive but it is a very good start," she says. "A huge step forward would be if a court looking at copyright infringement cites this statement."

***Vision Test* and AT&T**

"Ideally you're making films for other people to see and however that actually happens..." Wes Kim first responded after hearing that his short film *Vision Test* had been screened by Lois Baaumerich, the director of corporate equal opportunity/affirmative action at AT&T.

In Kim's smart six-minute film, a series of blurry seeing-eye charts are replaced with pairs of juxtaposed photographs; a white woman and a black man, an Asian man and a white man, an Asian family and a Jewish family gathered around a Menorah. An eye doctor asks questions about each pair of images: "Who would you be more comfortable with as president of the United States? Who would you be more comfortable with as your new neighbors?" While simple in both concept and production, *Vision Test* has now become widely recognized as a valuable teaching tool by teachers and other professionals,

some of whom have adopted it as part of their employee training programs.

So how did this small film from a novice filmmaker make its way onto AT&T's radar? Kim submitted *Vision Test* to a few traveling film festivals, such as the Microcinema International in San Francisco and the Media That Matters Film Festival based in New York, the latter annually showcases 16 independent social impact short films around the country and awarded *Vision Test* with the 2002 jury prize. And when Baumerich came across the Media That Matters festival online in February 2004, she was impressed by the creative way *Vision Test* addresses salient workplace issues such as racism, tolerance, and prejudice.

This kind of recognition is great news for Media That Matters, suggesting that both the audience and the scope of the festival are growing. "One of the things we are always trying to do," says Shira Golding, director of education and outreach at MediaRights.org, the organization that organizes the festival, "is not just preach to the converted but reach people who don't traditionally see this kind of

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A still from *Vision Test* [photo by Wes Kim]

media...Having media infiltrating the work place, especially in a big corporation like [AT&T], that has not happened very much in the past. To have this kind of work seen there and discussed and reviewed and hopefully impacting the way people think about themselves and their colleagues is very exciting."

Kim, who made the film in response to a call for works in which artists consider what it means to be American, says he is "kind of floored that this particular film, made with such small means and also with so little intent for it to get out there, has become this thing where I keep hearing that somebody knows a teacher who is using [the film]. Or somebody knows somebody working at a company who saw it somehow and is using it."

Inspired by the attention surrounding *Vision Test*, MediaRights.org is currently working on a partnership with the Society for Human Resources Management, one tenet of which would include screening the Media That Matters Film Festival at the society's yearly conference, with the hope of encouraging HR professionals to get online and access the MediaRights.org database and its extensive collection of social impact films. "All the films are very powerful to educate employees about issues in the community," says Golding.

The case of *Vision Test*, while unique, clearly indicates that regardless of budget or resources, an insightful piece that

speaks to compelling social issues can have an impact, helping others pursue goals of awareness and education while giving the filmmaker exposure. "It's kind of wild," says Kim. "If you're lucky enough to make something that has an impact on people, it will develop its own legs. Whether you capitalize on that or not is up to you."

—Erica Berenstein

Independence MovieFest

Sick of hustling to get your film shown? Try Independence MovieFest (iMF), an online festival that guarantees a 100 percent acceptance rate showing all submitted entries, regardless of length, in crisp DVD quality.

The festival, a joint effort by digital entertainment companies Kaneva and Ideas United (the founders of Campus MovieFest), is open for submissions until May 15, 2006 in the genres of drama, comedy, and documentary in both short and long formats. Within each category online audiences get to vote for their favorite 25, out of which a panel of judges will then choose the final winners. The "Best of iMF" and "Audience Choice" awards will be unveiled on July 4, 2006, the last day of the festival.

To post your film you need a media launcher, the backbone of the festival, which is downloadable from its website. Alternately, there is the option of submitting your film offline via snail-mail (there's

an entry fee in either case). Once uploaded, audiences with a purchased festival pass [less than \$10] can download films directly onto their desktops or watch shorts—30 minutes and less—via real-time streaming.

The event, which couples unlimited entries with the unlimited potential of the web, is stretching the bounds of the film festival. "With the internet you don't have a restriction of audience, you don't have a restriction of the number of theatres," says Chris Klaus, Kaneva's CEO. "One reason why festivals accept only 100, 200 films is because they only have so many screens or so much time. But if audiences look at [films] on the computer, they can watch an unlimited number of films."

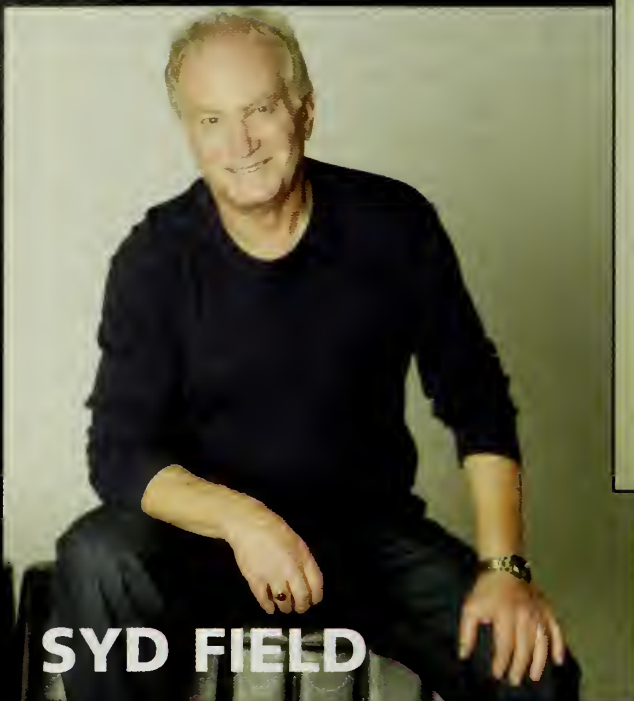
And unlimited audiences means unlimited exposure. "We brainstormed on how to come up with an online film festival. [Campus MovieFest] has experience doing red-carpet festivals at a school level. Their events have always been: Let's meet at this theater and show movies," says Klaus, explaining how festivals with a physical address are by nature restrictive. "This is a common issue with any festivals—how [much of an] audience can you build up with a geographical limit?"

The benefits of iMF don't stop when the festival is over. Filmmakers are invited to leave their films on Kaneva's web site (www.kaneva.com) and sell them online. All you have to do is set a price on your labor of love, and Kaneva will press your film on DVD, then package, and send out each online order. You get a non-exclusive deal (meaning you can show or sell your film at other festivals or venues) and up to 70 percent of the profit contingent on the amount sold.

There are only two kinds of films iMF doesn't accept: those you do not own the rights to—like, says Klaus, *Spiderman*—and any containing pornography. Other than that, Klaus says the festival is ideologically impartial and non-judgmental. "We are not sitting there like, 'We don't like this film so we won't put it on.' We don't want to limit the filmmaker in making what he or she wants to make."

—Fiona Ng ☆

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TOOLS YOU CAN USE

By David Alm

Keep a Low Profile

This fall, SL Cine, a Los Angeles film magazine manufacturer, introduced its latest low-profile magazine designed specifically for the ARRIflex 235 camera (one of the multi-city equipment rental firm's most popular and versatile cameras). The new SL-235LP displacement-style magazine features an extended throat for horizontal film load. With its compact, low profile, the SL-235LP is especially suited for remote, handheld, or super low-profile applications. Made of ultra-lightweight aircraft-grade aluminum, the SL-235LP weighs just 3.9 pounds and measures 15" x 7.5" x 2".



The Coco-DVL Power Converter
[photo courtesy of 16x9 Inc.]

Features include a manual footage counter built into the door and a speed range

of 0-150 fps. For more information visit www.slcline.com.

Camcorder Accoutrements

If you don't have a Sony camcorder, now could be a good time to buy one. In November, the Burbank-based camera accessories firm 16x9 Inc. introduced the latest in ever lighter and more efficient power sources: the Coco-DVL Power Converter. Compact and reasonably priced, the Coco-DVL draws voltage from Sony NPF970 series batteries to simultaneously power your camera and such 12V accessories as lights, on-board LCD monitors, and audio receivers. The converter can replace your camera's 7.2V NPF battery and can transfer 7.2V of power and Info-Lithium data from the battery directly to the camera while converting 7.2V to 12V for its accessories. Run time in record mode: 135 minutes. For a special introductory price of \$300 (suggested retail price is \$335), 16x9 Inc. will throw in its ultra-lightweight camera light, the Lux-DV.

Lest you think we're getting kickbacks from Sony, allow us to plug another offering from 16x9 Inc. for JVC camcorders. The Chrosziel Mattebox System and 4x4 Clamp-on Sunshade System is specifically designed for the JVC GY-HD100 (though it also works with other JVC models). With 16:9 housing and a snap-in 16:9 insert mask, the system offers precise shading capabilities for any setting. Features include a full-size French flag, filterstage for 2 filter holders, one 4x4 rotating and one 4x4/4x5.65 fixed combination filter



holder, a pivot mechanism (for optional side wings), and a 110:85mm insert ring. The system also includes a center bracket and lightweight support system with 15mm rods to ensure secure mounting. For cine-style feel and function, extra options include the Chrosziel DV Studio rig follow focus and Focus Gear Drive. The introductory price of \$1566 will soon hike up to \$1800; the optional features are also on sale. For more information on either the Coco-DVL or the Chrosziel Mattebox System and shade system, visit www.16x9inc.com.

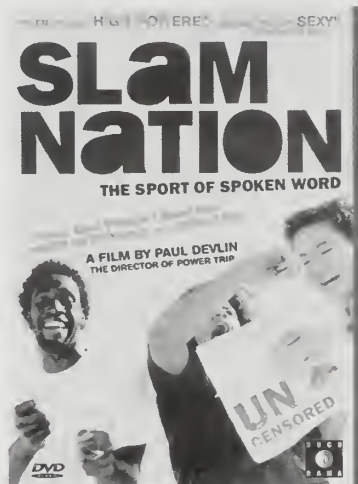
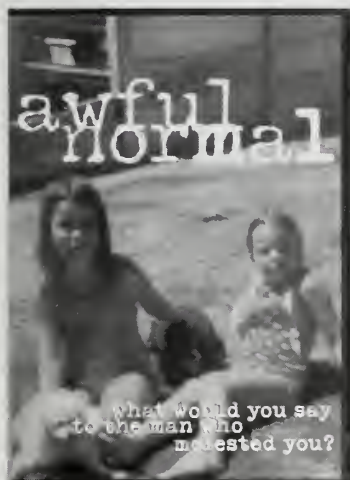
Editing on the Fly

For the on-the-go editor, Matrox released what it claims is the world's first external upgrade designed to deliver multi-display support to compatible laptops. The palm-sized box connects to the VGA output of a laptop, and allows you to attach two external displays to your system and run Windows at a resolution up to 2560x1024 across both displays. The system can also deliver multi-display options, thus maximizing your editing application's usability. DualHead2Go can even be used in conjunction with your laptop's built-in display, thereby giving you three displays at once. Moreover, sound professionals can extend tracks and place mixers across all three displays, while graphics designers can view photo editing and desktop publishing applications simultaneously. On the market since mid-November, DualHead2Go currently runs \$169. For more, visit www.matrox.com. ★

on DVD

Reviews of films now available on DVD

By Shana Liebman



Awful Normal

There is a helluva lot of crying in this movie—which isn't surprising as it is the story of two sisters who confront the man (their father's friend, Alan) who sexually abused them 25 years ago. *Awful Normal*, one of seven films that IndieWIRE chose for their 2005 Undiscovered Gems Film Festival, has a tremendous starting point with a natural arc, and the family dynamics yield some very rich material. It's a little surreal watching the sisters and their mother explain to Alan's now-grown children—whom they were friendly with as kids—that their father asked a five-year-old to give him a blowjob. The climactic scene in which the women confront Alan—most of which is an audio recording played against a black screen cut with home video clips of the girls as kids—is incredible. "I remember you were holding a Popsicle as I molested you," Alan says in full confession. There are other moving moments and it's heartening to see how satisfying a journey it is for the filmmakers—particularly for younger sister Celesta Davis, who made the film. But unlike *Capturing the Friedmans*,

there's no mystery or subtly or outsider perspective on this horror, so all the emotional outpouring and self-questioning make the film feel too much like a family therapy session. www.cinequestonline.org

SlamNation

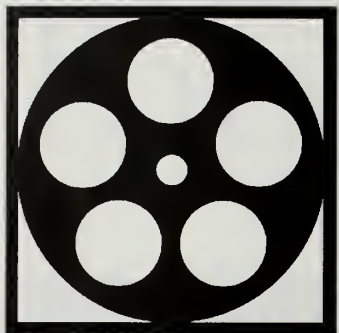
It's amazing that poetry slams—an oxymoronic barroom sport that started in Chicago in 1986—blossomed into a national grassroots art movement with such a large following. And it's certainly worth taking a look at how that happened. Paul Devlin's film, released in 1998 and just delivered to DVD with additional footage and filmmaker commentary, documents the 1996 National Poetry Slam held in Portland, Oregon with 27 teams democratically competing for the title. The documentary follows the New York team, including Saul Williams, who stars in the fictional *Slam*, and Mums the Schemer, who plays "Poet" on HBO's "Oz." With a sports-journalism perspective, Devlin offers interviews with competitors and clips of the contests. Aside from the occasional overindulgence in

insider slang, it's a lively, fun, educational introduction to this movement. Fierce and adrenaline-fueled performances deliver palpably the conflict for competitors between the desire to win and the desire for artistic and genuine self-expression. www.docurama.com

Dancing for Dollars

Paul Borghese's documentary, which won several film festival awards, is a compelling glimpse into the lives of Canadian erotic dancers, who claim they are nothing like their American counterparts (or as they disparagingly refer to them: "strippers.") "*Showgirls* was the most ridiculous thing ever," says one dancer about Paul Verhoeven's 1995 film (about which she is not alone in her thinking—the film was roundly panned). After watching their elaborate costume- and prop-filled routines, it's easy to see why these Canadians dancers deserve credit for the "show" in showgirl. A series of interviews reveal some interesting personal stories, the business aspects of the industry (i.e. how posing for nude magazines raises their "show price"), the extent of the individual planning and

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creativity that goes into each performance, how these women deal with family members who disapprove of their career choice and men who treat them as whores. The women, who seem to have been interviewed at generic, rural locations, are articulate and the clips of their performances spliced with their confessions makes for a rich and entertaining film. www.imdfilms.com

The Best of The Electric Company

"The Electric Company" was such a brilliant show—and is, amazingly, still beloved by its fans. Even 30 years later (and even though I've already mastered the differences between griddle and girdle), the hip '70s cast makes reading as much fun as doing flips on your bed when your mom is downstairs. There's such great energy and spirit behind the show's bright colors and funky music—and there's Morgan Freeman in a paisley headband and bellbottoms shaking his hips and singing "Easy Reader." You remember why you loved this show as a kid. I'm not sure if anyone over five will want to sit through all 20 episodes (again) or if a five-year-old today would still dig the vibe of this dated fantasyland. But the 4-disk set, which also includes interviews with Rita Moreno and

creator Joan Ganz Cooney, and a 28-page booklet with essays by, among others, Dave Eggers, is a serious testament to the series' lasting success. www.shoutfactory.com

Rize

Only David LaChapelle, a music video director cum fashion photographer, could have figured out how to sustain the energy and rhythm that propels this film. His debut feature *Rize*, which was a hit at Sundance last year, documents krumping, an offshoot of hip-hop made up of fast, convulsive moves, which became an expression of anger, need, competition, and sex in southern California shortly after the Rodney King riots. Krumping arose from clowning, another hip-hop subculture, which involves pantomime and face-paint, and the conflict between the two groups provides what little story structure there is in this film. Although the political insight into how dance became a community-strengthening tactic for a desperate LA subculture is interesting and important, the film lacks enough personal details and stories about the dancers. *Rize* succeeds most as an amazingly vivid visual show of vibrant gyrations and glistening bodies. <http://rizemovie.com/rize.php> ★

ASK

THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

I'm in my first week of editing, and I have this horrible feeling that my 100 hours of footage won't be enough even for a short. How can I stretch my film beyond the short format?

Most likely you are suffering first week editing jitters rather than a real short versus long format dilemma. Sometimes we wonder: "Do I have enough to tell the story?" Other times: "Oh my God I have so much amazing material, I need a six-part series." Neither reflects the reality of the situation but more a projection of what the story structure could be.

The decision between short and long format shouldn't be based on how much footage you've shot but rather on the story elements evident in that footage. Some questions to ask yourself, preferably much earlier than the first day of editing, are: How many characters do I have? How many of those characters have a story arc? And how many aspects of that arc can I explore? How many of those aspects can be expanded and revisited? Many characters with strong story arcs call for long format, while portraits with fewer angles are generally better suited for shorts.



You might have gone into your project with the intention of shooting a long format film, and the topic or character wore thin. Although the opposite scenario is more common, going from long to short can be tough to accept and even tougher to explain to investors. Maybe you can wait and shoot more, or just embrace the great possibilities and rewards of a short.

Cynthia Close, executive director of Documentary Educational Resources, a non-profit organization that produces, distributes, and promotes ethnographic and documentary films from around the world, assures us, "Length has never been

a deciding factor for us in evaluating any film for distribution. The defining factor is the content. Festivals, our marketing platform, welcome shorts of various lengths, and we got awarded with both short shorts, *Suckerfish* (8 min) by Lisa Jackson and longer shorts, *Cheerleader* (24 min) by Kimberlee Bassford."

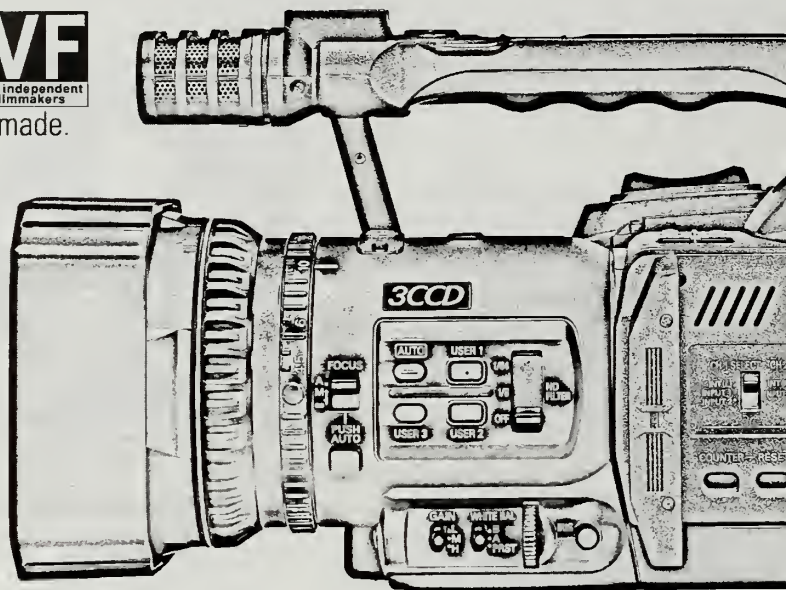
She also sees a bright future for shorts on the smallest screens: "With digital technology making it possible to deliver content to hand-held devices—cell phone, iPod, Palm Pilot—short films are reaching new venues and markets as audiences hang by a strap on the subway on their way to work." In the very near future, jitters over whether or not you have enough footage will be replaced by the question of how all the footage you do have can be streamlined and downloaded to a million cell phones.

Dear Doc Doctor:

People tell me the fundraising trailer for my feature length doc is more like a short film. Should I submit it to festivals as a short to start a buzz for the feature length?

Maybe you made a short film and decided to make a feature length film on the same topic. Rather than use your short to create a buzz for your longer film, I strongly suggest you spend a few days re-cutting that short into a real

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fundraising trailer, which is not very hard to do. After getting rid of the credits, cut the definitive end and replace it with something that hints at what you will explore in the long format film. That hint is called a cliffhanger or a hook.

If you don't change the ending, investors and grant organizations will ponder, and with good reason: Why invest in or finance something that works already as a short? What is the point in making it longer? Even if your proposal explains ad infinitum all the details that were left out of the short, it's hard to counteract in writing what a film conveys in imagery.

If you set out to do a trailer and ended up with a short, don't let your enthusiasm to attend festivals override marketing common sense. After a successful run at festivals, it would be hard to convince audiences of a longer encore. Besides, your trailer can take you on the road too. Virgilio Bravo and Loira Limbal makers of *Estilo Hip Hop* gave wings to their demo: "We visited over 20 colleges and universities with our fundraising trailer and a presentation on the topic of the film—hip hop in Latin America as a grassroots organizing tool. That started a buzz among our target audience. We raised enough money to start the editing, and now we are expected back in all those places with the finished film."

So embrace your trailer; it's not wasted time or money if you know how to use it. Although cross-pollination between shorts and fundraising trailers is sometimes possible, it is hardly ever advisable. The financial and marketing risks are not worth whatever little you save in re-editing one to create the other. ☆

Fernanda Rossi is a filmmaker and story consultant, and the author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making your Documentary Fundraising Trailer.



NAATA's 25th

Celebrating Asian Pacific American film

By April Elkjer

In the heart of San Francisco's Japantown at the Radisson Miyako Hotel, a roomful of filmmakers and community activists celebrated the 25th anniversary of a not-for-profit organization that funds, exhibits, and distributes Asian Pacific American film.

The National Asian American Telecommunications Association or NAATA has much to celebrate: It has literally changed the face of public television by presenting hundreds of programs that have reached millions of viewers nationwide. It is the largest distributor of Asian American media in the world with over 200 titles making their way into schools, libraries, museums, and community screening rooms. They host the world's biggest Asian American film festival with an audience of 25,000 that watches over 125 movies each year. Notable directors such as Ang Lee, M. Night Shyamalan, Mira Nair, Gurinder Chadha, Steven Okazaki, and Wayne Wang have all shown their early work at NAATA festivals.

The event also marked the unveiling of a new name: The Center for Asian American Media.

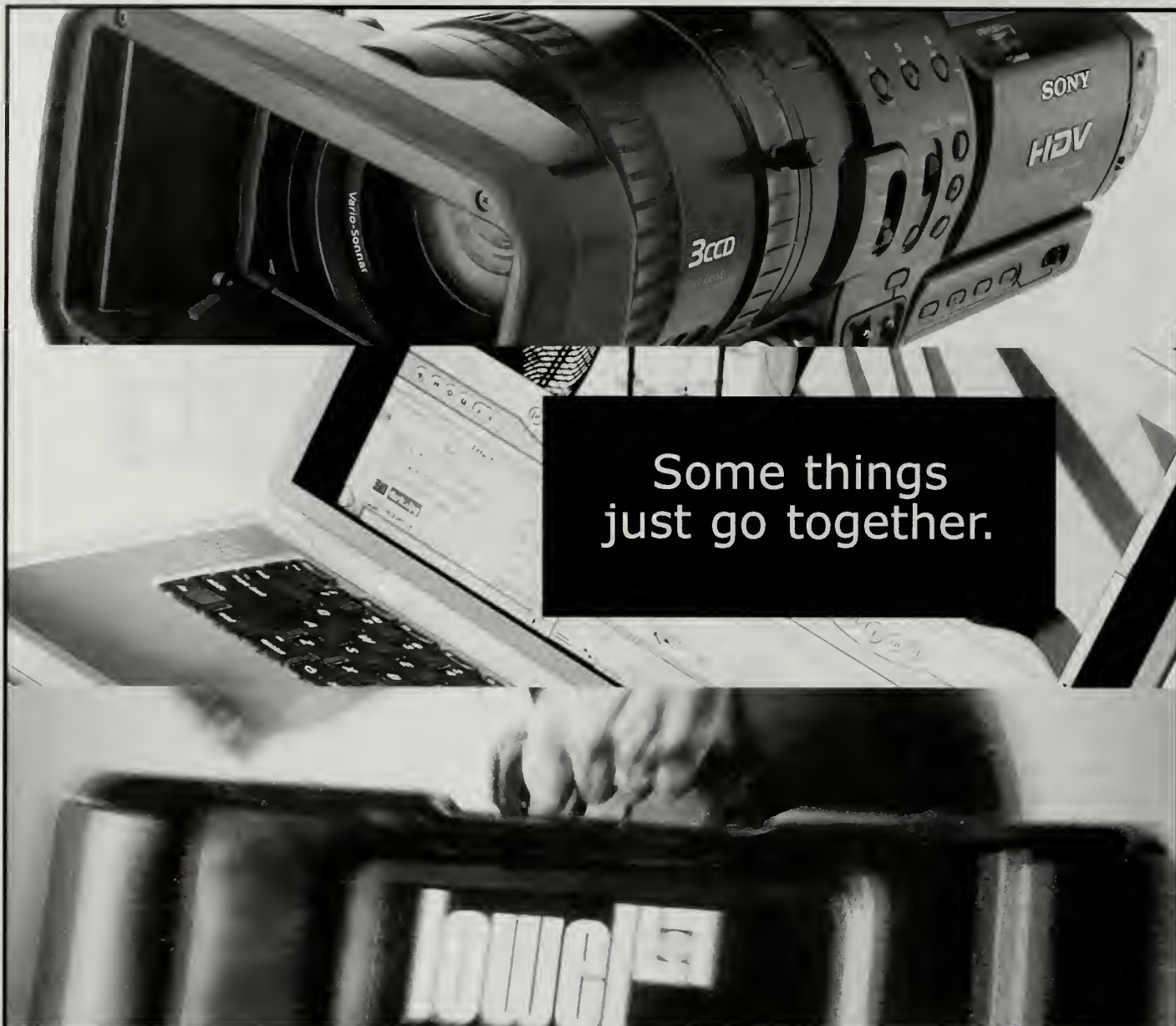


Deann Borshay Liem and Felicia Lowe [Photo by Albert Chau]

"We've outlived our name," explains Eddie Wong, executive director. "I think in the 1980s, when the word 'telecommunications' meant satellite broadcast, it meant a new era for communications. Today telecommunications means cell phones, PDAs; it just doesn't mean the same thing anymore, so we decided to go with a streamlined name that actually goes with what we do."

Ever at the forefront, the Center's birth can be traced back to 1980 at the University of California at Berkeley where Asian American media-makers, activists, and non-profit representatives gathered to discuss the state of Asian American media at the National Conference of Asian Pacific Producers in Public Broadcasting.

"There was a lot of enthusiasm for the



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Spencer Nakasako and Gene Cajayon at NAATA's 25th anniversary celebration
[Photo by Albert Chau]

idea; the time was right and when the time is right, people come in there [and] they set their egos aside. There's a lot of healthy thinking," says Felicia Lowe, filmmaker and co-founder. "A collective sense of saying, 'Let's put our energies together; let's not compete but let's make something better' and that's what really formed the growth and creativity and the beginning of NAATA."

The Center was formed to combat the lack of representation that many of those original conference-goers saw at the time in nationwide programming. In mainstream media, Asian American images ranged from overplayed stereotypes or worse, to actors in "yellow-face"—*Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Mickey Rooney as Mr. Yunioshi), *The Good Earth* (Paul Muni as Want Lung), or John Wayne as a yellow-faced Genghis Khan in *The Conqueror*. Ultimately, it seemed like no one knew what Asian Americans really looked like and what kinds of stories they had to tell.

The founders of the Center for Asian American Media felt a great need to

recast the Asian American image of "perpetual foreigner," so it crafted a mission to present stories that convey the richness and diversity of the Asian American experience to the broadest audience possible.

Twenty-five years later, many of the award-winning founders and friends of the Center were in attendance at the anniversary celebration, among them Loni Ding, who has produced over 250 broadcasts including *Ancestors in the Americas*, a PBS series that explores the history and legacy of Asian Americans, and Spencer Nakasako, best known for his films dealing with Southeast Asian refugee youth—*A.K.A. Don Bonus* (1995) and *Refugee* (2003).

Master of Ceremonies Nguyen Qui Duc, host of KQED public radio's national program "Pacific Time," kept things lively as filmmakers, board members, and staff from various media groups, including the Asian American Journalists Association and Independent Television Service, mingled. Greg Chew, the San Francisco Film Commissioner, showed up to say a few words rounding out the

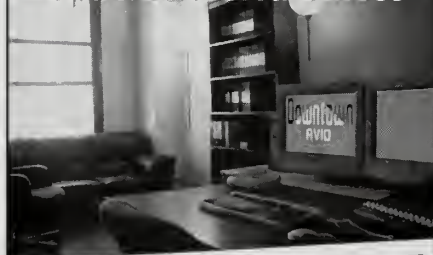


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Independent Film Center, which began in 1983 when it moved into 346 Ninth Street with the Film Arts Foundation, the Bay Area's leading membership organization of independent filmmakers. Frameline, long at the forefront of LGBT media, joined in 1991, followed by the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival in

able to talk about who we are with humor versus the earnestness we felt was required at that time to set that basic library of standards."

The Center also gives between \$30,000 and \$50,000 seed money each year to independent filmmakers. All told, they've given a total of \$3 million.

"I think that over the last 25 years there is a greater appreciation for Asian American history and stories of the Japanese American internment have gone deep in the schools," says Wong. "So I think there



The original poster from the founding conference
[photo courtesy of Nancy Hom]

1995. Together this consortium of media-makers decided to buy the building at 145 Ninth Street (two blocks from its original location.)

The Center for Asian American Media is definitely here to stay, and with 25 years of perspective, its members and staff can't help commenting on its remarkable contributions to the Asian American media landscape.

"I think the big change is the number of films that are being made," says Wong. "[The number] increases every year, and that's just a reflection [of the work the Center is doing]. The work is really getting good and getting diverse."

The Center funds and presents films, documentaries, shorts, and experimental works, although it wasn't always as diverse. "As one of the earlier pioneers in the business, I think many of us felt this really deep desire to create a basic library," says Lowe. "A basic fundamental history starting with things we didn't have in terms of how we got here and who we are. To see the kinds of works that are available now, such as comedy and drama and narratives, is so different. It's an outgrowth of being able to laugh at ourselves and have the confidence to be

has been progress made at the same time there's many more Asian ethnicities in the US now than before, and those stories are just beginning to be told—stories of the Mien people, the Hmong, and the Cambodians. So there's a lot more to do."

As the lights at the Miyako Hotel went dim, the crowd watched a selection of film clips from filmmakers who have benefited from the Center, starting with the touching and gritty *Who I Became* by Mike Siv, which first aired on the PBS series "Matters of Race" in fall 2003. The film tells the story of a young Khmer American man, Pounloe Chea—his years living on the streets, his trouble with the law, his pregnant girlfriend, and finally, his transformation into becoming a father. Other notable films were *The Grace Lee Project* by Grace Lee, *Halving the Bones* by Ruth Ozeki Counsbury, and *My America ...or Honk if You Love Buddha* by Renee Tajima-Pena.

After that, it was lights on and time for cake and champagne.

"It's great, but I feel old," laughed Wayne Wang. "That means I'm way over 25!" ☆

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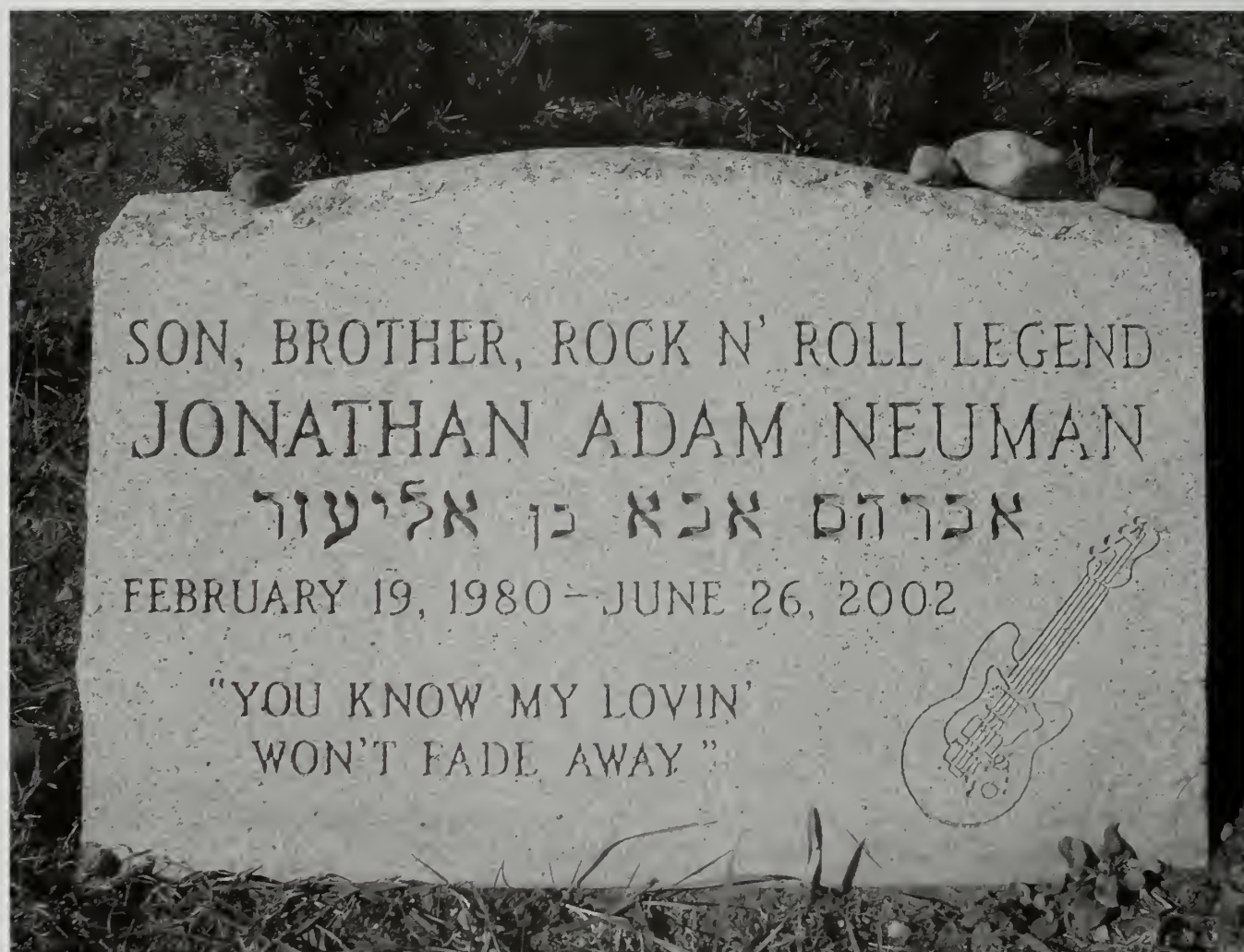
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All photos courtesy of Joshua Neuman

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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JOHNNY PHYSICAL

By Joshua Neuman

In October of 2000, my then 20-year-old brother Jonathan was sent to the oncology unit of Massachusetts General Hospital from the Tufts University campus infirmary after a month of persistent head and neck aches and a “suspicious” blood test. While in the waiting room, he stopped a nurse to ask what the word “oncology” meant. Less than 24 hours later he was diagnosed with leukemia.

At the time, I was an adjunct professor at New York University teaching undergraduate courses in philosophy. But, when I picked up my SONY DX-1000,

pointed it at Jonathan, and pressed record, I felt like a filmmaker. When I wasn’t at NYU, I was filming Jonathan in Paramus, NJ in our childhood home, in a hospital room (where he spent about half of his time), or at my apartment in Manhattan. I wasn’t capturing him on video because I thought he would die. Although today I am grateful to have so much footage of my brother, when the camera was recording, it never crossed our minds that we were creating an archive for posterity’s sake. In our minds, we were creating a narrative for art’s sake.

A little background: Jonathan was a

musician, a punk rocker to be more specific. He founded a garage rock band in 1999 called “The Physicals,” started calling himself “Johnny Physical,” and baptized the other members of the band: “Nick Fiction,” “Danny Animal,” and “Frankie Lines.” The Physicals were voted the best band on campus at Tufts University in the spring of 2000, and the members’ monikers were soon used more than their real names. So, long before my brother was the subject of my film narrative, he was the subject of his own narrative, one in which the line between life and art had already been blurred.



Jonathan Neuman (top) at WMFO in Medford, MA (Spring 2000); (bottom) with Danny Animal (Spring 2000)

It felt perfectly natural to capture Jonathan's crisis on camera. He was used to being the center of attention and, more importantly, to performing a particular part of himself for the sake of art. At first it was odd how Johnny Physical adapted to his new stage. Less than two weeks after he started chemotherapy treatment at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, when his blood counts were still perilously low, he performed an acoustic show for the other patients, which was advertised on the hospital bulletin boards as "Johnny Physical Plugged." I was in the front row with my video camera as he wheeled his I.V. machine into the day room and

broke into a new song he had written called "Chemotherapy." His hair shaved close, he was somewhere between Iggy Pop and Pee Wee Herman as he roared: "Chemotherapy, chemotherapy, it's what they're telling me."

A few months into his treatment, Jonathan developed a strange ringing in his ears and lost sensation in the tips of his fingers, but this didn't discourage him from taking up the piano. He practiced into the wee hours of the night, falling in love with the instrument as well as with the works of the German romantic composers Schubert and Schumann. I shot a recital that he gave less than a year later.

The Physicals' first record had been

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called "Get Physical With the Physicals." In this spirit, Jonathan and I planned to turn the footage we were capturing into a concert video called "Physical Therapy." In it, we would include footage from his acoustic show, from his jam session with Art Garfunkel (who heard about Johnny Physical and paid him a surprise visit in the hospital), and from his appearance as the "pinhead" at Joey Ramone's annual birthday bash at CBGB (a hero of Jonathan's since he was a teenager, Joey died of lymphoma in 2001). Slowly but surely, the legend of Johnny Physical grew. ARI-UP of the influential '70s punk band The Slits, also paid him a surprise visit in the hospital and Johnny would soon count 2001 Miss USA Candice Kruger and *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit cover girl Yamila among his legion of admirers.

Jonathan's prognosis deteriorated but shooting of the film continued. Jonathan recorded an album of Johnny Cash covers when he could barely speak. He composed songs on an OmniChord OM-300 when he couldn't hold a guitar. When even that became impossible, he simply made sounds into a tape recorder he kept at his bedside—a kind of verbal notebook. I captured all of it on video.

A week before Jonathan's last visit to the intensive care unit, he was paid a visit by Albert Maysles, who at the time was shooting footage for a Bill Moyers documentary about death. Albert planned to interview Jonathan for 20 minutes. He left after he ran out of tape, two and a half hours later. Albert noticed a newspaper item from the *Tufts Daily* of Jonathan making out with "groupie 36,000." Jonathan tried to explain Johnny Physical to Albert, but told him that he'd have to see our film to fully understand.

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Johnny Physical's alter ego, El Conquistador (Spring 2000)

Jonathan passed away in June of 2002, over three years ago. At first, all I could do was stare at the stacks of digital tapes as they collected dust on my desk. Then, slowly but surely, I started watching the raw footage, tape by tape, logging time code, and mapping out sequences on a yellow legal pad. I realized that in addition to being about the power of music to transfigure experience, they were also about the camera's power. Looking at his arm for a clean vein for the next syringe, he was Sid Vicious searching for an angry fix. When the chemo started to make its way through his arm, he was Lou Reed rushing on a run. And, yes, on a very (very) rare occasion he was Joey Ramone meeting a nurse that he could go for. The Physicals had performed for crowds of hundreds when Jonathan was healthy, but the camera gave him an audience of infinite possibility. For the last year and a half of his life, in cold examining rooms, miserable waiting rooms, lonely hospital rooms, he was never just a patient. He was a rock 'n' roll legend.

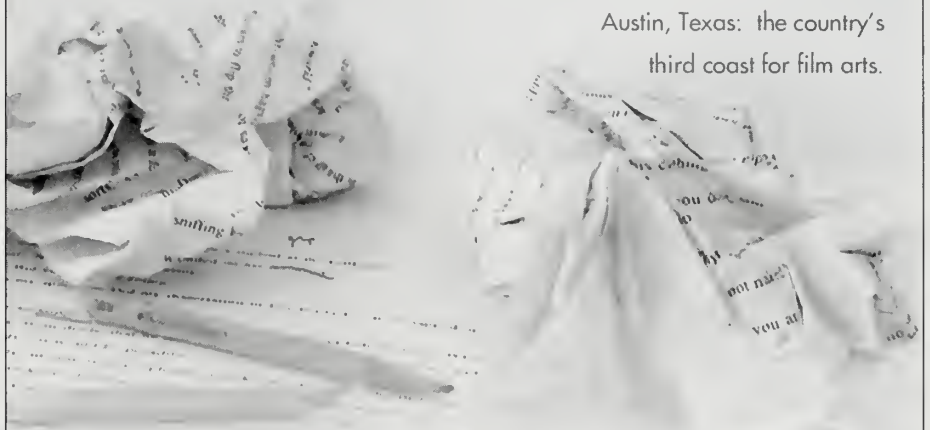
Albert Maysles was kind enough to grant me permission to use the tapes he had captured of Jonathan. My good friend Eder Belzberg agreed to executive produce. And in February, I will enter an editing studio to start working on my first short film. I want the film to unfold like a Physical song: fast, urgent, darkly comic, and fiercely unsentimental. Until someone discovers a cure for cancer, films about the disease will inevitably be sad. But this film, as you might have guessed by now, isn't really about cancer at all. ☆

For more information about Johnny Physical, check out www.johnnyphysical.com.

Write without pay until somebody offers to pay. — Mark Twain

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Mind Over Matter

By Ethan Alter

Warning: If you're the kind of filmgoer (or, for that matter, filmmaker) that's wary of all things mainstream, then the new book *The Mind of the Modern Moviemaker* will probably cause you to run screaming to your local art house cinema for a 10-hour Béla Tarr retrospective. Almost every one of the 20 directors profiled has helmed a studio picture and several of them freely admit to being a proud part of the Hollywood system. As *Rush Hour* director Brett Ratner boldly states, "I don't ask for [final cut]. Why do I need [it]? Final cut is for 'artistes' quote unquote—directors who don't make a lot of money."

In other words, don't pick up this book expecting to read about the next Bergman, Fellini, or even John Sayles. Still, author Josh Horowitz does present us with an interesting cross section of the generation of filmmakers currently making their presence felt in La-La Land. In addition to avowed company men like Ratner, Luke Greenfield, and Todd Phillips, the book also includes Q&A interviews with a few cult favorites (Kevin Smith, Richard Kelly), critical darlings (David Gordon Green, Neil LaBute), first-timers (Kerry Conran, Patty Jenkins), self-styled outsiders (Joe Carnahan, Trey Parker, and Matt Stone) and reliable journeymen (Jon Favreau, Chris and Paul Weitz). Horowitz even makes room for a universally reviled director like McG, who uses this opportunity to insist that he's a deeper filmmaker than the *Charlie's Angels* films suggest. "I wanted to do more with [*Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*] than I was ultimately able to do," he tells Horowitz with a

THE MIND OF THE MODERN MOVIEMAKER

20
Conversations with the
New Generation
of Filmmakers

Josh Horowitz

INCLUDING
KEVIN SMITH: *Clerks*
Chasing Amy
McG: *Charlie's Angels*
CHRIS & PAUL WEITZ:
American Pie *About a Boy*
DOUG LIMAN: *Swingers*
The Bourne Identity
MICHEL GONDRY: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*
TREY PARKER & MATT STONE:
South Park *Team America*
NEIL LABUTE: *In the Company of Men* *Nurse Betty*
BRETT RATNER: *Rush Hour* *X-Men*
TODD PHILLIPS: *Old School*
JON FAVREAU: *Made* *E.T.*
PATTY JENKINS: *Monter*



Plume, 2006

straight face. What, was he planning on giving Cameron Diaz's booty its own subplot?

In his introduction, Horowitz, a television producer and contributor to such magazines as *Entertainment Weekly* and *Us Weekly*, outlines his reasons for writing the book. "Countless books have been written about the seminal filmmakers of the 1970s...but the book I always wanted to read...was the one written then. As fascinating as it is today to hear someone like Spielberg or Scorsese or Coppola or De Palma reflect on the past, what were they thinking at the time and in the moment?" Rather than wait for the current crop of directors to grow older and perhaps wiser, Horowitz decided to capture some of

them on the record right now. "The filmmakers in this book are still developing," he writes. "For many, their best work is yet to come and that is perhaps what is most exciting about them."

While it's debatable whether McG or Luke Greenfield (whose credits include the Rob Schneider comedy *The Animal* and the mediocre *Risky Business* knock-off *The Girl Next Door*) are truly directors to get excited about, Horowitz's reasoning behind the book is sound. It's fun to hunt down old interviews with Spielberg and Scorsese before they became institutions. There's an immediacy and excitement in their responses that reflective career-spanning books such as *Scorsese on Scorsese*, as comprehensive as they are, can't replicate. One can imagine some of the directors profiled in *The Mind of the Modern Moviemaker* picking up the book 20 years from now and groaning at their naiveté. But it might also spur them to recon-

nect with why they fell in love with movies in the first place. And after two decades in Hollywood, anyone could use that kind of reminder.

Describing his methodology for choosing which directors to speak with, Horowitz writes: "I had no hard and fast criteria for the filmmakers in this book other than talent and significant and promising contributions to American filmmaking." Given the book's grab-bag assortment of personalities though, it's safe to assume that the line-up was largely determined by which directors agreed to speak with him. One would be hard-pressed to argue, for example, that John Hamburg (director of *Safe Men* and *Along Came Polly*) has made more significant

contributions to American filmmaking than, say, Kimberly Pierce or Paul Thomas Anderson. In fact, Anderson is cited by many of the filmmakers in the book as an important contemporary influence, along with other usual suspects like David Fincher and Quentin Tarantino. Horowitz owns up to the absence of some of these heavy-hitters by writing, "Perhaps the greatest testament to the breadth of talent that exists today is that 20 more filmmakers could have added to this book without any diminishment of talent."

Horowitz's introduction also acknowledges another element that's missing from the book's cast of characters: diversity. Of the 20 directors the author interviewed only two are women (Patty Jenkins and Karyn Kusama) and only one is African-American (F. Gary Gray). "The reality remains that Hollywood filmmaking is still dominated by one gender and race," Horowitz explains, adding vaguely that, "the playing field today is undeniably shifting and will, no doubt, continue to do so." While it's true that the pool of minority filmmakers in Hollywood remains limited, it's a shame that Horowitz only included three in his book when there are definitely more out there to choose from. Take Justin Lin, director of the Asian-American crime picture *Better Luck Tomorrow*, who helmed Disney's upcoming military-themed drama *Annapolis* and is currently shooting the third entry in Sony's *Fast and the Furious* franchise. Or what about Tim Story, the African-American director who leapt from *Barbershop* to Fox's summer blockbuster *Fantastic Four*? You've also got Guillermo del Toro (*Hellboy*), Malcolm D. Lee (*Undercover Brother*), Catherine Hardwicke (*Thirteen* and *Lords of Dogtown*)...the list goes on. Surely any of these filmmakers would have a more interesting perspective on breaking into the industry than McG. At least Karyn Kusama is on hand to talk about going from the low-budget *Girlfight* to Paramount's December 2005 tentpole release *Aeon Flux*. Her ambivalence about the experience ("I'm not sure studios are necessarily the most instructive places for filmmakers to be," she tells Horowitz) is a telling change of pace from the gung-ho

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attitude of someone like Brett Ratner who comes across as the poster child for the modern studio filmmaker.

As an interviewer, Horowitz peppers his subjects with genial questions that elicit entertaining, if not always insightful, responses. Each interview follows a similar format with the author first inquiring about the subject's childhood and early years before moving on to his or her experiences as a director. At the end of every chapter, the filmmakers answer an "Inside the Actors Studio"-like questionnaire, which includes such brainteasers as "What is the first film you ever saw?" and "What's your favorite movie snack food?" Despite their vastly different backgrounds, these 20 individuals do, it turns out, share some things in common. For starters, most of them attended film school, if only in some cases for a few semesters. Names like Spielberg, Coppola and Zemeckis keep popping up as early influences. (Believe it or not, hipster favorite Michel Gondry cites *Back to the Future* as his favorite film of all time). Many also took strikingly similar paths on the road to directing their first feature. David Gordon Green, Joe Carnahan, and Kevin Smith all financed their debuts largely on their own dime, while Brett Ratner, McG, and F. Gary Gray used music videos as their calling card. Others like Dylan Kidd and Patty Jenkins worked on the fringes of the industry for years until they got the chance to direct. Even if you've heard their stories before, reading them again just reinforces the fact that in Hollywood there's no direct route into the director's chair. That's at once both depressing and exciting—depressing because the odds of success are astronomical, but exciting because you truly never know where the next great filmmaker is going to come from.

Part of the fun of reading books like *The Mind of the Modern Moviemaker* is the promise of backstage gossip, but Horowitz doesn't push the directors to share secrets, and most of them are too professional (or, more likely, too worried about any possible repercussions) to say what really happened when the cameras weren't rolling. A few do speak candidly about their experiences in Hollywood. Doug Liman, for example, basically



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accuses *The Bourne Identity* producer Frank Marshall of stealing the credit for that film's success and later explains why he considers *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* to be "the most flawed of my movies." (Don't expect to learn any juicy gossip about Brangelina, though). Elsewhere, Kevin Smith remains his reliably sarcastic self, ripping on his pal Ben Affleck and the poor box office receipts of *Mallrats* and *Jersey Girl*, while Dylan Kidd admits that he botched his follow-up to *Roger Dodger* with the poorly received *P.S.* And then there are the "South Park" boys Trey Parker and Matt Stone, who spend most of their interview complaining about how much they despise moviemaking. (Parker's answer to "Who is your favorite actor or actress of all time?" is "I hate them all.") As always with these two, you can never tell how much of their attitude is an act, but it's funny all the same.

While all of the interviews are pleasant to read, they also feel somewhat superficial. Horowitz provides you with a good sense of where these directors came from but not necessarily what makes them tick. In some cases, that's due to the subject's own guarded self-analysis, but other times the author simply declines to ask more probing follow-up questions. It would have been interesting to know, for example, why exactly Michel Gondry pays such close attention to reviews of his work or what impact Neil LaBute's conversion to Mormonism had on his writing. To his credit, Horowitz does try to get each of the directors to weigh in on at least one long-running argument, such as whether music videos can be a good training ground for feature filmmakers (Kusama says no; McG says yes) or if art and commerce can co-exist in a big-budget blockbuster. This line of questioning yields some of the book's more intriguing responses; it's too bad Horowitz wasn't able to organize a roundtable discussion so the filmmakers could talk about these different topics in more detail. Ultimately, *The Mind of the Modern Moviemaker* provides you with a broad overview of 20 directors currently working in Hollywood, but if you really want to learn more about them, you'll have to watch their movies. And maybe that's the way it should be. ★

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THE SHORT STORY AT SUNDANCE

Behind the scenes with
the short film programmers

BY NICK SCHAGER

Watching 2,000 short films in four months isn't something you take on in your free time. It requires a finely honed system. For Roberta Munroe, one of the Sundance Film Festival's two short film programmers, that system resembles an assembly line of video playback equipment. Since 2001, Munroe has spent an enormous chunk of her time from August to November ensconced in her LA apartment, situated amidst a television on a wheeling cart, her DVD-enabled laptop, two DVD players (one all-region, one region 1), and two VCRs (one PAL, one NTSC).

She fills each machine with a different festival submission, watches one after the other, and then repeats the process, sifting through thousands of diverse films in an effort to prepare for Sundance's showcase of domestic and international shorts. Some days, this routine might last only six hours, other days—especially during the deadline-looming month of November—it can go on for 14 or more hours. It's not an exaggeration to say that, along with fellow programmer Mike Plante, Munroe likely watches as many (if not more) short films in a given year than anyone else in the world.

Perhaps no film festival outside of France's esteemed



Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival lavishes as much attention and holds such a lofty industry position as Sundance's annual Short Film Festival. Launched in 1982 as a component of the United States Film and Video Festival (which would merge in 1985 with Robert Redford's Sundance Institute to become the Sundance Film Festival), the program started as a peripheral part of the overall festival but has nevertheless, over the past two decades, become one of the premier destinations for short films. Expanded to include international films, the festival has awarded two jury prizes since 2004 (for best American and international shorts), both of which are chosen from the 4,000-plus submissions sent to Sundance—and, specifically, to Munroe and Plante—each year from around the globe (roughly 25 percent come from locales outside the US). To put into perspective the phenomenal growth of the short film festival, submission numbers were closer to 2,000 per year as recently as 2001.

With regards to their moviewatching careers, Munroe often tells Plante, "I think that we're kind of insane," a sentiment that most people who hear about their colossal workload generally concur with. "Anybody we talk to outside of the programming



Top: The Egyptian Theater at Sundance; bottom: Park City, Utah
[photos by Fred Hayes/Wireimage]

world thinks that they'd shoot themselves in the head if they had to watch 2,000 short films." Though she admits that slogging through such an overwhelming number of films can be daunting and, at times, exhausting, Munroe views her job not as a chore

but as a rare opportunity to introduce exciting films and filmmakers to the world that, without a place like Sundance, might never receive such a chance. "What really drives me is the hope that the next film I watch is going to be a really good film and that we're going to have another film to show up in Park City the likes of which has never been seen before," she says.

Such optimism is the guiding force for both Munroe and Plante, who forged separate (but similar) paths to Sundance after years of filmmaking and festival work. A Toronto native with a lifelong passion for film ("It's sort of a cliché, but film is just one of my greatest loves," she says), Munroe started her festival career in the early '90s as co-director of the Inside/Out Lesbian & Gay Film Festival in Toronto. From there, she moved on to the Toronto International Film Festival and, in 1999 and 2000, worked as the administrative manager of the New York Film Festival and as a programmer of New York's IFP Market. Offered a festival manager post at Outfest Los Angeles Lesbian Gay Film Festival in 2001, the self-described "East Coast girl" packed her bags for what she believed would be a six-month stint in sunny California. But shortly after Outfest finished, Munroe, Los Angeles' who was also working on a variety of filmmaking projects, heard that Sundance senior programmer Trevor Groth was looking for someone to help out with the festival's short films. One interview later, the post was hers.

And during her first year, it was all hers. "I literally did everything all by myself," she says, recalling her inaugural festival. However, with submissions increasing a whopping 50 percent between the 2001 and 2002 festivals and Munroe admitting that, "I already sort of had tears of blood coming out of my eyes the first year," it became clear that it was impossible for one person to handle the avalanche of shorts arriving on Sundance's doorstep. Enter Plante. An aspiring filmmaker who'd cut his teeth working as a projectionist in Tucson, Plante found his way to Sundance after a gig at the Telluride Film Festival led him to Chapin Cutler, the technical director of both Sundance and Telluride. Cutler was looking for someone to work as the presentation manager—in essence, a "quality control of projection" job—at the Park City-based festival. Hired for the post, Plante spent his first year troubleshooting technical problems at the festival, acting as "the buffer between filmmaker and projectionist." After helping program the 2002 CineVegas Film Festival with Groth, he was hired the following year to be Munroe's short film programming partner.

Like Munroe, Plante started off as a budding filmmaker with a passion for the medium. "I always liked the idea of film festivals being this great [venue for] exposure," he says, especially "since movie theaters have really sort of gone away besides those in mass malls and the arthouses in big cities." His reasons for finding employment in the festival world, however, weren't completely driven by a love of the cinema. "I needed a job," he concedes with a chuckle. Upon joining Sundance, he was surprised to find an environment that confounded his expectations. "I

anticipated everybody would be on power trips...but it was the exact opposite. Everybody was really cool and down to earth, and everybody knew a lot about film—not just film history, but what was going on today, what was going on in other countries, what was going on in the art film world. It was completely eye-opening."

Programming together for the past three years, Munroe says that she and Plante consider themselves "essentially married" during the programming process, "even though I'm a lesbian and he has a girlfriend!" Nonetheless, the duo doesn't sort through the pile of submissions all by themselves. A group of "consultants" (who are not official Sundance employees), are the first group of people to view the submissions, with each consultant watching and taking notes (called "coverage") on anywhere from 100 to 700 tapes. Thus, each film has already been watched in its entirety and commented on critically before it's viewed by one of the two programmers. "Then, if one of us thinks it's even remotely worth showing, we'll give it to the other person," Plante explains. Once Plante and Munroe make it through their respective share of submissions, the two whittle the group down to around 200-250 films, which are then handed off to Groth—who, besides working as a feature film programmer, also collaborates with the two-person programming committee. From that group, the three debate and argue, and ultimately make a decision on which 80-90 films will be entered into competition.

With the exception of 20-25 films that annually screen in front of features, shorts are presented in one of eight programs: five for narrative films, one for documentaries, one for animation, and one (the "Frontier" program) for avant-garde and experimental works. Shorts are generally defined as films running under 50 minutes (for documentaries) and under 70 minutes (for features). However, as both programmers are quick to note, the majority of shorts that are selected for Sundance run 15 minutes or less. "Usually less," Plante says. And unlike the feature festival, which often places a premium on high-profile premieres, no such demands are made of shorts—the only criteria for selection is quality. Given that submissions run the gamut in terms of production value and subject matter, the standards by which each short is judged are, as Plante admits, "pretty vague. Like a [feature-length] film, it's just got to work for itself."

Though a seemingly daunting mission, both programmers admit that narrowing down submissions isn't as tough as it seems. "Most of them are just good films, and then there are the prize few that are just exceptional," says Munroe. "And often they're documentaries, because someone has gotten incredible access to an incredible subject, found an unbelievably talented editor, and made a beautiful documentary." Figuring out which films make the grade, however, is made easier by the fact that so many are wholly unoriginal. Nonfiction films regularly concentrate on current events for their stories—the past few years' hot



Shorts programmers Roberta Monroe and Mike Plante

topic being soldier stories involving GIs recently home from Iraq—and Munroe says that these shorts usually provide nothing that hasn't already been seen ad nauseam on the national news. When it comes to fiction shorts, Munroe cites clichés and directorial plagiarism as the most frequent shortcomings, with rip-offs of current movies and popular directors (Wong Kar Wai and Wes Anderson are the most popular source material for current short filmmakers) a familiar attribute of submissions.

But even more so than those problems, Munroe says that short filmmakers' most consistent failing is their lack of knowledge about what other types of films are being produced. "You need to be out there seeing what other people are making," so as to avoid producing stuff that's already been done, she urges. And, if you're interested in actually being accepted by a festival, "you need to go on websites to find out what other festivals are programming." Learning what types of shorts are being accepted into festival competitions is, she says, a shrewd means of developing a project. "Nobody cares about you and your buddies on a road trip to Vegas where you meet the Devil and have to make a decision between your soul and the million dollars on the table," says Munroe, referencing a variation on one of many stories seen by the programmers each year. "It's like [a shot of someone] drinking straight from a Jack Daniels bottle. Whoa! I haven't seen that in, like, 15 minutes."

Such shortcomings have become more glaring, in part, because of the sheer volume of shorts now inundating Sundance. Yet even though they wish it were the case, neither Munroe nor Plante believes that the escalating number of annual submissions means that short filmmaking has become more popular; rather, both attribute the situation to budding auteurs' increased access to relatively low-cost, high-tech filmmaking tools. With every wannabe Scorsese able to make a short film with an off-the-shelf digital video camera, Final Cut Pro on their iMac, and many actors willing to work for peanuts, anybody who ever dreamed of making a film now can (and does). The result of this boom is that, "the quality of production has gotten better," says Plante. "People have gotten smarter about shooting, smarter about sound. But it still comes down to the level of writing and edit-

"What really drives me is the hope that the next film I watch is going to be a really good film and that we're going to have another film to show up in Park City the likes of which has never been seen before."

—Roberta Monroe

ing—that's what always seems to make the difference. That has not gotten better. Which makes sense, because some people are writers and editors, and some people are not."

Once their programming duties are done, Munroe and Plante have nothing to do with choosing the competition's winners and losers. Yet both are encouraged by the fact that shorts now experience an elongated lifespan after the festival is over. Most shorts still function as calling cards for future work; Munroe says that she thinks, "the number one thing short filmmakers are looking for at Sundance is finding an agent or manager." And the Sundance Online Film Festival—begun in 2001 as a means of nurturing web-only productions—increasingly prolongs the life of these works (and helps them get seen by a wider audience) by providing directors with the option of offering their films, for free and with reasonably high video quality, on the Web. While roughly half of the filmmakers chose not to participate in the Online Festival in 2005 (likely for reasons involving the web's technical limitations and their own desire to make money off of their movies), the added exposure for films via this online outlet can—along with the networking opportunities afforded by Sundance—greatly aid filmmakers in furthering their careers.

Ultimately, Munroe and Plante agree that their prime mandate is to help shine a spotlight on up-and-coming artists, and they handle each submission with the same attention and care that, were the roles reversed, they'd want their own films to receive. "You try to strike a nice balance between helping people out that are going to do something and showing shorts that will never have a life any other way, which is especially true of the avant-garde stuff," says Plante. Because, as filmmakers, they know, "what it's like to tough it out [making a movie] with \$43 worth of Kraft service and all your friends working for free." Munroe believes one of her chief duties is to give each and every film she watches considerable attention, care, and respect. "This is someone's vision that I'm about to put into my DVD player, and hopefully I'm going to see that it was realized," she says. "That's an important thing, and as much as we joke about it, we take [that responsibility] very seriously."

WITNESS TO

Peter Gabriel's organization harnesses the power of putting human rights coverage on film

BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

System Failure: Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the California Youth Authority has all the elements you've come to expect from an earnest, well-intentioned documentary. There are heartrending interviews with young people who have been incarcerated in California's juvenile prisons, their parents, and the advocates who work with them. These interviews are well lit and seamlessly edited. There is archival footage of the state legislature, and clips from local news reports on a savage 2001 beating of several "wards" (as the young inmates are known) at the hands of guards. There is b-roll footage taken inside the prison and at reformers' rallies and demonstrations. There is an opening sequence and a score, chapter headings and even a proper credit sequence.

System Failure, however, is not really a documentary—it was not made by filmmakers who recorded hundreds of hours of footage and then painstakingly assembled a finished product based on their observations. The 31-minute movie never did the rounds at festivals or crossed the transom at PBS or HBO or any of the other popular outlets for nonfiction film. It doesn't have a theatrical distribution deal. The video was made by Books Not Bars, an advocacy group that works to reform the California Youth Authority (CYA), in partnership with WITNESS, a Brooklyn-based organization dedicated to arming human rights activists with the tools they need to make targeted, savvy media about their causes.

WITNESS does not mind if this distinction is lost upon viewers; in many ways it is probably good if *System Failure's* audience does not feel as if it is watching a tiresome and pedantic piece of propaganda, but is instead caught up in the story and persuaded by the film's imagery. But as it has with every one of its partners, WITNESS set out to help Books Not Bars make a film that would have a very specific aim—in this case to aid in the CYA reform effort. "We stress that you are not making a video about an issue, but rather for a purpose, for an audience," says Sam Gregory, WITNESS' program manager. "You want to persuade and shame and move that audience."

The power of video is undeniable. What one person might report—or even what a newspaper might explicate—pales in



Global protests against sweatshops, from WITNESS video "Behind the Labels" [Oxygen Television LLC/WITNESS]

comparison to the persuasive power of an image. Decision-makers and even ordinary citizens often feel they must act once they have seen footage of a disaster or a crime. "Powerful images become a source of energy for social change," says Andrew Blau, a media analyst and a member of the WITNESS board. "Once you have seen it, the burden is on you to do something about it."

For its part, Books Not Bars has found its partnership with WITNESS enormously effective. "We wanted decision makers to really understand what it would be like to be in the CYA and how they could reform the system," says Books Not Bars Executive Director Lenore Anderson. "We wanted them to do more than just paint the windows a new color and hire a nicer staff person." Since mounting a campaign to distribute the film to judges, public defenders, district attorneys, and members of the California government, the CYA population has dropped from 5,000 to just 2,300. "The judges who sentence kids understand these issues better, as well as probation officers, and people who make policy. This film has turned people's hearts around and given them a real sense of what it means to send young people to one of these facilities," says Anderson.

WITNESS is the brainchild of the musician Peter Gabriel, who has long been interested in human rights issues and had

CHANGE



NAKAMATA films the assassination of one of its leaders [NAKAMATA/WITNESS]

been affiliated with Amnesty International and other organizations over the years. He founded WITNESS in 1992, in the wake of the Rodney King beating. The now-iconic footage of that incident, in which an African-American motorist was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers, sparked a national—even international—debate about the appropriate use of amateur video footage. The men who beat King were eventually acquitted of any criminal wrongdoing, a verdict that sparked devastating riots, but regardless of what you thought of the guilt

or innocence of those police officers or of Rodney King himself, the power of that grainy footage was undeniable. “People understood that if you saw something that was normally hidden, you could change the public discourse,” says Blau. “Once you change what can be seen, you change our ability to do something about it.”

An average citizen, equipped with a hand-held video camera of the type used to film children’s soccer games and family get-togethers, had changed the way Americans view law enforce-



A young soldier in the Democratic Republic of Congo
[photo courtesy of WITNESS]

ment and brought attention to the way minorities are treated by police. What was once the exclusive territory of journalists and professional filmmakers had been opened up to anyone with access to a camera.

Gabriel recognized that human rights work would never be the same: Cheap and readily available technology meant that the victims of crimes, both here and abroad, could document their plight through compelling images. But the Rodney King footage also provided a cautionary tale. “Those images sparked a national conversation and real social protest, but there was no conviction, no lasting systematic change,” says Blau.

Gabriel hoped WITNESS would help filmmakers harness their images for a purpose and help them follow through on that aim. In 1992, he helped set up the organization under the auspices of the Lawyer’s Committee for Human Rights (now Human Rights First), and WITNESS’s small staff went to work finding local activists with which they could work. WITNESS acquired hundreds of cameras and some editing equipment and set about making it available.

It was a unique moment in the history of media. Inexpensive cameras could be had by the hundreds and used with little training or expertise; in contrast to film, video was cheap and easy to edit, which required a minimum of training and expertise. The Internet was just beginning to catch on with ordinary civilian users and, over the next decade, would explode as a platform for still and video images, and as a means to spread information and ideas.

The WITNESS staff quickly realized that merely making cameras available was not enough. “In the beginning there was an emphasis on getting the camera out there, but that was never really the biggest added value,” says Gillian Caldwell, WITNESS’ executive director. “The biggest value was always the technical and tactical advice to help them develop a powerful visual vocabulary surrounding their issue.”

WITNESS began developing techniques that could be distributed along with the equipment. “At the core of our work is

the principal that you know your objective and goal for change and from there, you work out to the audience you need to reach and from there you move to the video,” says Gregory.

Before they could set about making a film, local organizations needed to identify their audiences: Were they legislators or judges, journalists or townspeople isolated in the countryside? What did the film hope to accomplish? Was it designed to promote a specific policy or referendum? Was it designed to educate people about a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or expose an atrocity that had been suppressed? And how would the local organization get its footage: Would it interview people or attempt to film an incident?

“Our distribution strategy is what we call tactical media,” says Caldwell. “It’s not a focus on maximizing the number of eyeballs or on getting a television broadcast or a big premier. It’s very focused on what’s the solution and who the media needs to get to in order to ensure that the solution is implemented.”

WITNESS wanted to ensure that its grantees understood the power of a film to persuade, took that power seriously, and protected themselves against any potential dangers. “We wanted people to use video in ways that are ethical and effective,” says Gregory. “What does it mean to use somebody’s voice? What does it mean to edit together two contrasting viewpoints? And what will it mean when your worst enemy can see you talking about human rights violations?”

As it grew, WITNESS realized that in order to implement this strategy, it would need to work more closely with a smaller number of organizations. Instead of scattershot grants, an intense partnership program was put in place. Each partner was carefully chosen based on the strength of their work, the clarity of their mission, and the possibility that a video would help accomplish their goals. In addition to granting permission to equipment and technical training, a WITNESS staff member would travel to meet with a representative of the organization in their home country—from Colombia and the Congo, to Thailand and sights in the US—to help them flesh out their objectives. As filming is com-



Gillian Caldwell (photo by Joseph Moran)

pleted, partners spend time in the WITNESS offices editing their video and further honing their strategy.

These partnerships, says Caldwell, are a model for how Western organizations can interact with human rights activists who have close, personal ties to a crisis. Instead of a pedantic “you have the problem, we have the answer” methodology, Caldwell and her staff work to enable local people to help themselves. “The underlying theory of [our work at WITNESS] is that change really depends on the strength and visibility of local human rights defenders,” she says. “Western human rights organizations tend to focus on report writing and on identifying trends. And then they make recommendations. That role is important but we want to empower these groups to plot their own solution.”

“WITNESS gets that there are people struggling for generations upon generations to change the conditions in which they live,” says Anderson. “They get that people have been fighting for their human rights and that if an organization comes in and says ‘we’re going to do something,’ that can be enormously damaging and unhelpful. What most people need are resources and tools, they don’t need bosses.”

Thanks to its success—and to the galloping pace of digital advancement—WITNESS has flourished. When Caldwell

joined the organization as executive director in 1998 (she had previously been a WITNESS partner herself; her three-year project produced a film that used hidden camera footage to record the trafficking of sex workers in the states of the former Soviet Union, and an extensive advocacy and international awareness campaign), she had a staff of one and a budget of around \$100,000. Today, the organization is housed in two floors of an office building behind the Brooklyn Academy of Music, has a staff of 20, and an annual budget of \$3 million.

They have more than a dozen active partnerships at a time, plus many other smaller projects. They attracted the de rigueur attention of Angelina Jolie, who traveled with WITNESS staffers to Sierra Leone to observe the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, about which WITNESS produced a video for distribution throughout the countryside. And WITNESS has assembled what is perhaps the largest archive of footage about human rights abuses anywhere in the world. It is a grim but powerful repository, a memory bank for victims of atrocities who would otherwise be forgotten or ignored.

As digital cameras and camera phones proliferate worldwide—and penetrate even the most remote areas—the WITNESS’ mandate, and the services it provides to activists, promises to grow even more pressing. Last October, WITNESS also published a book, *Video for Change: A Guide for Advocacy and Activism*, which anyone can download for free off the WITNESS website. Gregory and Caldwell hope it will be an invaluable tool for human rights advocates who cannot be WITNESS partners—or even for ordinary filmmakers interested in making targeted films.

Documentary filmmakers will no doubt want to distinguish their work from WITNESS projects. After all, many self-styled storytellers value the investigative process in which a WITNESS film must by nature eschew as extraneous to a specific strategy. But Caldwell thinks the WITNESS method could benefit ordinary filmmakers tremendously. “What often happens in video and documentary filmmaking is there is so little funding and so few opportunities for distribution that people invest themselves heavily in making a movie and then run out of gas and time to invest when it comes to distribution,” she says. “A more targeted set of goals and a broader set of allies committed to distribution could be hugely valuable to them.”

For her part, Books Not Bars’ Anderson thinks that filmmakers could learn an even more important lesson from WITNESS: “When I went to law school I remember that only one of my professors said anything about the responsibility of lawyers. He said, ‘You’re now being given a tool and that is power, and you can either use that to improve the world around you or to maintain the status quo. I think all skilled professionals are faced with that same choice. Filmmakers are a group of people with a tremendous amount of power and the ability to shape the world we live in. You can use that power to continue things the way they are or you can change the world.’ ★

UTOPIC MACDOWELL



The Eaves at MacDowell in the fall [photo by David Macy]

Filmmakers find creative retreat at the New Hampshire artists' colony

BY KATHERINE DYKSTRA

Deep in the wooded region of Peterborough, New Hampshire exists a sprawling artists' enclave whose 32 studios rest in the shadow of the majestic Mount Monadnock. For nearly a century, the MacDowell Colony has been known for grooming celebrated writers such as James Baldwin, and Willa Cather, and artists like Milton Avery. More recently though, as its list of alumna starts to read more and more like a virtual who's who in contemporary independent film, it seems that MacDowell has deftly cultivated a reputation for having helped turn out filmmakers of a similar high profile variety.

"Oh, utopia," is how filmmaker Ira Sachs (*Forty Shades of Blue*, 2005) described it to his peer, Rodney Evans when Evans mentioned his recent stint at MacDowell.

"That's always the response from everyone," explains Evans, whose well-received *Brother to Brother* won the Sundance Special Jury Prize in 2004, and who has taken two separate sojourns to New Hampshire, his most recent in the summer of 2005. "[MacDowell] really goes above and beyond most of the other colonies in terms of protecting you from outside distractions. They do everything they can to help you focus on your work."

Sachs and Evans are far from alone in their sentiments. It seems that there are artists' colonies—more than 250 in the United States and many more worldwide—and then there is MacDowell, the relative gold standard when it comes to quiet time away for letting creativity flow.

"The field is diverse ... It does not believe in the one size fits all approach," says Deborah Obalil, the executive director the Alliance of Artists Communities, a national service organization for the field of artists' communities, that serves as an informal hub for those who run them and artists who are searching for them. "No two artists create in the same way, so no two communities are created in the same way. But MacDowell is among the largest and the oldest and is, in many ways, held up as the model of what an artists' colony is."

Days at MacDowell stretch out long and unburdened, free from the hassles of everyday life—there is no housework to be done (a housekeeping staff maintains resident rooms), no bills to pay (some residents even get a stipend to subsidize rent or lost wages during their stay), no one to call or email (the rooms are phone- and internet-free, though wireless connections are available upon request), and no meals to prepare (breakfast and dinner are served communally, lunch is dropped off on resident's



doorsteps in the signature MacDowell wicker basket). There is only the work.

"MacDowell is a space to write," says filmmaker Joshua Marston, who revised the script for *Maria Full of Grace* (which earned its rising star an Oscar nomination in 2004) during his first MacDowell residency four years ago, and recently completed his second stay there. "It's not a place to learn; it's not about studying. It's about the space and the support to do one's work."

For every artist, but perhaps especially for independent filmmakers, whose materials go beyond pen and paper, this kind of support is invaluable. Exploring character and humanity in visual narrative and documentary form is challenging and important work. But as most filmmakers know, money is continually difficult to find, time often allusive, and the necessary support to complete a film often nonexistent. And that's where MacDowell comes in.

Says Student Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Mitch McCabe (*Highway 403, Mile 39, This Corrosion*), who plans on returning to MacDowell this spring for her third residency: "It is a great place to give people [whose] resources are a problem or anytime finances are a question, a place to concentrate, to do your craft."

And support comes not just in the form of time and money, but also as friendship and camaraderie. Year after year the MacDowell community of artists grows, and although the emphasis is always on the work, community breakfasts and dinners give artists the inherent opportunity to learn from each other, grow artistically, and provide mutual encouragement.

"The dialog between artists is great, a lot of the other artists will ask you what you're working on and then will turn you on to something you didn't know about but will be advantageous to the screenplay," says Evans, noting in particular his providential relationship with fellow colonist, Doug Wright, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright (*I Am My Own Wife*), who helped Evans to sort out the structure of a particularly complicated screenplay.

The general sorting out of ideas is a common obstacle for filmmakers, perhaps as much so as financial restraints. "MacDowell is an extraordinarily valuable resource

Filmmakers at MacDowell (from top, clockwise): Joshua Marston [photo by Joanna Eldredge Morrissey]; David Petersen [photo by Joanna Eldredge Morrissey]; Rodney Evans [photo by Joanna Eldredge Morrissey]; Jenny Livingston [photo courtesy of Livingston]; Ira Sachs [photo courtesy of Sachs]



MacDowell fellows leave their mark on tombstones by signing their names; some tombstones are as old as the colony itself and feature signatures from Aaron Copland, Alice Walker, and Thornton Wilder [photo by Joanna Eldredge Morrissey]

because independent filmmakers are constantly struggling, and part of that struggle is how to carve out the space and the time to work," says Marston. "Plus, by virtue of being independent, you're not being supported by studios or what have you, and MacDowell enables that support. It's just one more pillar of support for the filmmaking community."

A pillar of support for the filmmaking community, and a feather in the cap for the individual filmmaker—having an artists' residency on your resume, especially one as well-respected as MacDowell, lends a whole new shine to your career. Often a residency will extend to further opportunities.

"[Residencies are] beneficial in terms of building a reputation as an emerging artist. It helps to have a residency at MacDowell or Yaddo on your resume for grant applications, and to get into other residency programs, there is respect for the programs and the people who go there," says Evans, citing Yaddo, another of the few US residencies in league with MacDowell.

Although filmmaking at MacDowell has a long history, it wasn't until the mid-'70s that the colony began accepting filmmakers as filmmakers. This is not to say that filmmakers didn't attend. They did, but only by restructuring their work to meet the confines of conventional genres; fiction, poetry, composing, etc—screenwriters applied just as writers, film score composers as composers. As Obalil puts it: "Artists are very good at creatively fitting in different boxes."

When the board at MacDowell realized how many filmmakers were producing work while in residency, work that was ending up in movie theaters, they alighted on the notion to create a category specifically for filmmakers.

"MacDowell's whole philosophy was based on the fact that all

the arts have something to say to one another," says Cheryl Young, MacDowell's executive director. "That model means that you would always include new genres and disciplines. When we looked at the writers whose work resulted in produced films, we found 63 filmmakers from 1907 to the mid-1980s.

"The first female president of the colony," Young continues, "Elodie Osborn, really worked to separate film out from the other disciplines, establishing a film panel, working on a selection process and doing the outreach we were doing with other disciplines." Today, a film fellowship exists in Osborn's name.

In the quarter century since the official film program was instituted, applications for filmmaking residencies have steadily gone up in number. The last decade saw a 50 percent increase in filmmakers applying to MacDowell, with those accepted up from six in 1996 to 21 in 2005.

"When I was there in 2003—I was there for six to seven weeks—there were no other filmmakers the entire time I was there," says McCabe. "But when I went back in 2004, Rodney [Evans] had just left, and there were actually two or three others there."

And now, as one of only a small number of artists' colonies that cater to filmmakers—Obalil estimates that 20 percent of American residency programs have separate genres for filmmakers and that out of those, MacDowell is one of the only ones that exists outside an urban setting—MacDowell is doing what it can to keep the doors open to filmmakers who have previously attended, and to encourage those who have neither attended nor applied, to do so.

It's not altogether surprising that very few filmmakers know

that places such as MacDowell exist—Evans calls it, “Americas best kept secret for artists.” But the reasons are varied—from a lack of outreach, to the fact that today’s filmmakers are just part of a different generation and cultural vernacular.

“I don’t think people are talking about it, even in the film schools. The faculty are old, so you don’t have generations of people who’ve gone through residency programs,” Young says. “But the next generation will tell their students that they had this experience when they were starting out.”

And then there’s also the elitism factor. As Evans diplomatically points out, residency programs are, “a very specific circuit—they don’t go out of their way to publicize themselves. If you’re in that world, and you’re trying to make work, then you will have had access to these communities or done research to find out about them.”

It’s true that artist residency programs often suggest a certain level of insider preciousness. And if it sounds a little cliquy, it is. Artists who are hip to residencies knew a good thing when they found it. But that doesn’t mean residencies will forever be off-limits to a self-taught filmmaker from Duluth.

“Places like MacDowell have always been known by a certain artist audience,” says Obalil, “which is usually the least likely [community] to spread the word, because the more artists know the harder to get a residency, for that reason some programs don’t allow repeat residencies, they spread the support around.”

For its part, MacDowell does allow artists to attend residen-

cies (which run up to eight-weeks) as many times as they are accepted. Although one could argue that given the number of repeat residencies, once you’re in, you’re in.

When it comes to art in the US, there is and probably always will be a primary focus on product, outcome, and commerce—film festivals, art exhibits, readings at bookstores—with less to little focus on the actual creation of that product. And that’s what’s admirable about artist residency programs. There’s an undeniable mandate of artistic integrity within their mission.

“The concept of the residency program is not as widely known as it could be, that’s the nature of everything that supports art behind the scenes,” says Obalil.

Last summer, MacDowell put up a 32-person film studio with an editing room, as yet to be properly dedicated—“We’re looking for someone to put their name on it,” says Young—and for years, the colony has had its own steamvac (filmmakers who aren’t into analog can bring their iMac with Final Cut Pro or what have you). Young hopes that these efforts will encourage more filmmaker applicants. “The film discipline needs to make itself heard so residency programs can help and adapt.”

After all, a lot of creativity can occur in the woods. “In the city there’s a finite amount of time to get work done and juggling life issues and paying bills and going to social events,” says Evans. “I don’t give myself the luxury to experiment with radical ideas. But radical things happen naturally in [residency] environments.” Thoreau couldn’t have said it better himself. ★



Savidge Library: the colony's library, which houses the MacDowell collection of artwork and literature by fellows [photo by Joanna Eldredge Morrissey]

Expanding Broadband

The legislative battle continues



By Matt Dunne

As any politician will tell you, incumbency has tremendous benefits. The same can be said for the competitive world of telecommunications. Existing telephone and cable companies have traditionally had the wires and other physical infrastructure in place to keep upstart providers out. This advantage has led to what is essentially a monopoly (albeit a regulated one) with significant control over the ways new communication technology, such as broadband, is distributed.

Over the last decade, new technologies have offered competitive methods of delivering broadband—including over wireless (Wi-Fi) and existing power lines—without the need for massive infrastructure investment. Furthermore, municipalities who are tired of waiting for broadband to arrive have gone out on their own to negotiate deals with outside providers to blanket their cities with service. This service is much faster than what cable companies provide currently, and

competitive rates would allow even low-income communities real access. At first, these municipalities were viewed as quixotic. However, once these entrepreneurs and innovative politicians gained traction, the incumbents, threatened by this new competition, declared war.

The importance of broadband is growing every day. With the advent of Voiceover Internet Protocol (VoIP), new companies have sprung up to provide cheap telephone service over the internet. Cable companies now offer broadband data services, and traditional phone companies, who were the first to offer faster internet connections, are about to start delivering movies over their lines. With data, voice, and video converging onto a single platform, though, the capacity of the network to deliver these services at acceptable speeds becomes crucial to consumers and content providers.

The film and video industry has a

unique interest in the expansion of high-speed broadband. The ability to deliver streaming video directly to the home has the potential to drastically reduce the cost of distribution and make studio gatekeepers much less relevant. Filmmakers would be able to use innovative, grass-roots methods of distribution and actually compete with traditional high-cost theater, cable, or television. The technology to make this possible is already here. While the average American internet connection is 500 kilobits per second, much too slow for film distribution, Japan is already delivering 100 megabits per second to millions of people, ample speed with which to watch a film on the internet without ever having to download it onto your computer.

Municipalities across the country have started to launch their own systems to deliver high-speed access to all of their constituents. Philadelphia has partnered with EarthLink to furnish the city with wireless broadband. Large cities like

Chicago and San Francisco are attempting to follow suit, as are smaller communities like Lafayette, LA, Madison, WI, and Burlington, VT. Big companies like Google have gotten into the delivery game, as have small innovative start-ups like Azulstar Networks and Cellnet. The projected cost to consumers is around half what residents pay for much slower delivery.

The backlash from powerful incumbents has been swift and brutal. In response to the Philadelphia partnership with EarthLink, telecom lobbyists in Pennsylvania pushed through a ban of any future municipal-supported systems. According to an August 2005 *Governing* magazine story, 14 states have introduced legislation to restrict or actually ban new municipal broadband systems, and a few, including Pennsylvania and Nebraska, have succeeded in passing such prohibitions.

Incumbents make a variety of arguments in their case to crush further municipal deployment. The Heartland Institute, a conservative think tank that has taken the lead in opposing municipal broadband, warns that city governments are getting in over their heads by trying to run enterprises in a fast-paced business sector, and, in a series of reports, makes the case that the numbers projected in the government-backed proposals are too optimistic and would lead to significant tax liabilities down the road. Others say that it's unfair for government to compete with private industry.

In a CNET News.com story last May, BellSouth spokesman Joe Chandler argued that his industry simply wants to ensure "fair" competition which he believes would include bans on tax subsidies for municipal start-ups, equal tax liabilities for for-profit carriers, and even requirements that the public vote on new proposals. In the same article, Matthew Spitzer, dean of the University of Southern California Law School, suggests there are further dangers, stating that, "Once a city gets into a business that's directly competitive with private companies, there are temptations to regulate the private companies in ways that disadvantage them."

This political battle, however, is not

the typical cut-and-dry fight between public interest lefties and big industry, or even between Republicans and Democrats. Technology corporate giants including Intel, Google, and Microsoft have all weighed in in support of broadband through wireless and municipal systems. *Fortune* magazine columnist David Kirkpatrick made the case last October that universal high-speed broadband would add \$500 billion to the US gross domestic product, due to greater efficiencies and new technologies allowed by enhanced communications super highways. Municipal broadband has also gained passionate backing from Republican defenders of market competition including Senator John McCain (R-Arizona) and Congressman Chris Cannon (R-Utah), who argue that municipal broadband will increase economic development and wealth.

Despite the wholehearted support of these unusual bedfellows, state legislatures continue to pass prohibitions of municipal systems. The local telecoms are very powerful forces in the individual state capitals, much more so than larger out-of-state technology corporations. At the federal level, where Intel and Google would have more influence, Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-New Jersey) and McCain have introduced a bill to preempt state efforts to ban municipal networks. However, the 2004 Supreme Court ruling in *Nixon v. Missouri Municipal League*, which upheld state prohibitions as legal, is expected to be cited as a precedent that such laws are a matter of state's rights.

As a result, for those who believe an expansion of municipal broadband is important, the fight must be taken to the state level and soon. Many of the remaining 35 states that have not yet weighed in on the issue have bills pending for the upcoming legislative year. The Benton Foundation has some excellent online resources for heading up your own advocacy efforts. This would be an excellent time for the progressive film community to band together with the emerging new economy technology innovators to ensure that high-speed broadband becomes ubiquitous. ★

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By Katie Ainslie

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cast-lists, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org.

ARIZONA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 20-30, AZ. Deadline: Feb. 10. Festival's mission is to showcase independent work (preferably not in distribution) from around the world to Arizona audiences. Works participate in "The Reel Frontier" Film & Video Competition or are invited to non-competitive programs. Founded: 1990. Cats: experimental, feature, doc, short, animation. Awards: Best of Category; Best of Arizona; "Bridging Cultures" Award; Best Chicano Film. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, MiniDV, DVcam, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30 (under 45 min.); \$50 (45 min. & over). Contact: Guilio Scalinge; (520) 628-1737; reelfrontier@azmac.org; www.azmac.org/festival/index2.html.

ARTIVIST FILM FESTIVAL, July 26-30, CA. Deadline: Nov. 15; Dec. 15; Jan. 15; Feb. 3 (final). Seeks to strengthen the voice of int'l activist filmmakers & artists who wish to raise public awareness & funds for global social causes. Cats: doc, feature, experimental, animation, music video, musical, photographs, visual art, short. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, DVD. VHS or DVD; CD or CD-ROM for photographs & visual art. Entry Fee: \$30-\$70. Contact: Festival; (310) 712-1222; info@artivistfilmfestival.org; artivistfilmfestival.org.

ARIZONA STATE ART MUSEUM SHORT FILM &

VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 15, AZ. Deadline: Feb. 10. The fest is a free one night outdoor fest. Entries should be no longer than 10-12 min. All entries become a part of the Museum's video library. Founded: 1997. Cats: short, experimental. Awards: Juror's Choice (2), LeBlanc Audience Choice & AZ award (Arizona artists only). Preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: None. Contact: John D. Spiak, Curatorial Museum Specialist; (480) 965-2787; fax: (480) 965-5254; spiak@asu.edu; asuartmuseum.asu.edu/filmfest/.

ATHENS INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 28-May 4, OH. Deadline: Jan. 30. Annual fest celebrating independent, documentary & experimental works. Each entry is pre-screened by a committee of artists. Works w/ high regard for artistic innovation, sensitivity to content & personal involvement w/ the medium are welcomed. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Awards: Cash awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta, Beta SP, mini-DV. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35, plus s.a.s.e./insurance. Contact: Ruth Bradley; (740) 593-1330; fax: 597-2560; bradley@ohiou.edu; www.athensfest.org.

ATLANTA FILM FESTIVAL, June 9-17, GA. Deadline: Feb. 3. Features premiere screenings of independent film & video, informa-

tive seminars, panel discussions & guest appearances by filmmakers, video artists, & media professionals from around the world. Award-winning short narrative/animation experimental works are eligible for Academy Award(s) Nomination. Founded: 1977. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student, youth media. Awards: Over \$100,000 in cash & in-kind prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (individual/nonprofit); \$30 (IMAGE members/students); \$50 (distrib./for profit). Contact: Paul Marchant, Festival Director; (404) 352-4225; fax: 352-0173; aff@imagefv.org; www.atlantafilmfestival.com.

BARE BONES INT'L INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 17-13, OK. Deadline: Jan. 26 (final). Projects budgeted for less than a million dollars are eligible to enter the fest. Seven days of screenings, workshops, screenplay readings, location tour, youth film projects. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script, music video, student, youth media. Awards: Auteur of the Year; Audience Choice Award; Grand Jury Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Most video formats. Entry Fee: \$20-\$50. Contact: Shiron Butterfly Ray; (918) 616-1335; barebonesfilmfestival@yahoo.com; www.barebonesfilmfestival.com.

BIG ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL, May 18-21, HI. Deadline: Feb. 1; March 1 (final). Fest's mission is to "celebrate independent narrative filmmakers & independent narrative films." Films must be narrative films completed after Jan. 1 of previous yr. & w/out commercial exhibition or distribution. Cats: feature, short, animation, family, student, surfing. Formats: DVD, Beta SP. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: shorts: \$25,\$30,\$40; features: \$25,\$40,\$50. Contact: Leo W. Sears, Exec Dir.; (808) 557-5200; entries@bigislandfilmfestival.com; www.bigislandfilmfestival.com.

BROOKLYN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 2-11, NY. Deadline: March 15 (Final). The Brooklyn Int'l Film Festival (BIFF), was established in 1998 as the first int'l competitive film fest in New York. Since 2002, BIFF has been partnering w/ the Brooklyn Museum. In the effort of consolidating its int'l presence, BIFF has been developing solid ties w/ major overseas film fests & distribution companies as well as successfully pursuing int'l sponsorship. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short, animation. Awards: Each yr. the festival awards a total of approx. US \$50,000 in services & cash. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV, DVD, CD-ROM, DigiBeta, HD cam. Preview on DVD or VHS (non-returnable). Entry Fee: \$30; \$50 (final). Contact: Marco Ursino; (718) 388-4306; fax: 599-5039; 2006@wbff.org; www.wbff.org.

CRESTED BUTTE REEL FEST, August 9-13, CO. Deadline: Feb. 15; March 31 (final). Competitive short film fest focusing on films under 40 min. & documentary films under 60 min. Founded: 1998. Cats: short, student, doc, animation, experimental. Awards: Juried film, & audience awards incl. Gold (\$500) & Silver (\$250) in each category. The BOB Award (\$150) plus handcrafted award rewards the entry that pushes the envelope the farthest. The Grand Prix Award (\$500) is a pre-juried award given to the Best Film of the Festival, which can be from any of the four cats. Formats: 35mm, Beta, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40; \$50 (final). Contact: Eney Jones, Exec. Dir.; (970) 349-2600; fax: 349-1384; info@cbreelfest.com; www.crestedbuttereelfest.com.

DA VINCI FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, July 14-16,

OR. Deadline: Jan. 15; Feb. 28; March 30. Fest is looking for original works not exceeding 30 min. in length (documentaries can only be a max of 50 min.) Submissions in three main cats: K-12, college & independent. Founded: 1988. Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: Awards given in each category. Formats: film, video, digital. Preview on VHS (NTSC only). Entry Fee: college/indie \$20, \$35, \$50; K-12 \$10, \$15, \$20. Contact: Sue Queisser; (541) 752-5584 / 757-6363; fax: (541) 754-7590; davincifilmfest@aol.com; www.davincidays.org/filmfestival.

DANCES W/ FILMS, July 21-27, CA. Deadline: early: Jan 2nd; standard: Apr. 24; Late: May 29. All films admitted for screening are selected using only one major criterion: they must have been completed w/out any known director, actors, producers, or monies from known sources (e.g., known production companies). Films must have been completed by Jan. 1 of previous year. Founded: 1998. Cats: family, youth media, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: Best of (feature, short); Best Screenplay (feature, short); Audience Award (feature, short). Formats: Beta SP, 16mm, 35mm, DV, HD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: early deadline \$50 feature/\$35 short; standard deadline \$60 feature/\$40 short; late deadline 75 both. Contact: Leslee Scallan; (323) 850-2929; fax: 850-2928; info@dancesw/films.com; www.DancesWithFilms.com.

THE DELTA INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 21-22. Deadline: March 1. The Delta Int'l Film & Video Festival is devoted to showcasing the work of independent film & video makers/artists. We are looking for work that exhibits exceptional artistry, insight, & innovation in all cats & genres. Held at Delta State University in Cleveland, MS, the DIFVF unspools in the heart of the Mississippi Delta—a unique, thriving, culturally rich & diverse region of the US. Founded: 2005. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, student. Formats: 16mm, DVD, DV, VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$25; \$15 (students). Contact: Robyn Moore; (662) 846-4731; rmoore@deltastate.edu; www.art.deltastate.edu.

DENVER PAN AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL, April

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24-30, CO. Deadline: January 31; late Feb 15. Cats: feature, short, doc, experimental. Contact: Festival; 303-832-3190; fax: 303-299-9064; palmwine21@hotmail.com; www.panafricanarts.org/.

DENVER PAN AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL, April 24-30, CO. Deadline: January 31; late Feb 15. Cats: feature, short, doc, experimental. Contact: Festival; 303-832-3190; fax: 303-299-9064; palmwine21@hotmail.com; www.panafricanarts.org.

HARRY M. WARNER FESTIVAL OF SHORT FILM & VIDEO, April 20-21, PA. Deadline: Jan. 1; Feb. 1 (final). Fest takes place on the campus of Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, seeking shorts (under 20 min.). Harry M. Warner, one of the Warner Bros., established the first Warner Movie Theater in New Castle, PA in 1907. Fest will also occur in conjunction w/ "Kaleidoscope," Slippery Rock University's Annual Arts Festival. Founded: 2005. Cats: any style or genre, doc, feature, experimental, animation, short. Awards: Three renowned judges will determine the top three cash awards (\$1,500 first prize, \$1,000 second prize, \$750 third prize) plus honorable mentions.. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD. preview on VHS or mini-DV. Entry Fee: \$15; \$35 (final). Contact: Jon Shumway; (724) 738-2714; fax: 738-4485; jon.shumway@sru.edu; http://academics.sru.edu/warner/entries.html.

HI MOM! FILM FESTIVAL, June 9-10, NC. Deadline: Jan. 1 (early); Mar. 1 (final). Festival is accepting short shorts & not-so-short shorts w/ deep thoughts & shallow pockets. Two glorious days, three hot nights, six flaming trophies! Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: Cash & non-cash prizes awarded. Formats: DVD, Beta SP, Hi8, CD-ROM, super 8, 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS (PAL or NTSC). Entry Fee: None (early); \$15 (final). Contact: Matt Hedt; (919)967-4338; himomfilmfest@mindspring.com; www.himomfilmfestival.org.

HIGH-DEF FILM FESTIVAL, WORLD TOUR EVENT. Deadline: Feb. 1. HDFEST is known as "the world's only high-definition film fest" due to the fact the fest showcases projects in HD which have been shot in HD format exclusively. HDFEST works to bring together filmmakers & technological innovators from all

over the world. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, TV, music video. Awards: World tour screening. Formats: DVD, VHS. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (under 40 min); \$50 (others). Contact: Hdfest Productions; admin@hdfest.com; www.hdfest.com.

HUMBOLDT INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, April 1-8, CA. Deadline: Jan. 27; Feb. 17 (final). The 39th Humboldt Int'l Short Film Festival is the oldest continuous student-run fest in the world. Since its inception in 1967, the Fest continues to support & celebrate filmmakers working in experimental & non-traditional ways. Films must be under 45 min. in length & completed in the last three years. Founded: 1967. Cats: narrative, experimental, animation, doc, & the "you call it" category, short, any style or genre. Awards: More than \$3,000 in cash & prizes. Formats: 16mm, Digital Video. Preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (under 9 min.); \$20 (10-29 min.); \$30 (30-60 min); \$10 additional for Int'l entries. Contact: Ivy Matheny; (707) 826-4113; fax: 826-4112; filmfest@humboldt.edu; www.humboldt.edu/~filmfest.

IOWA CITY INT'L DOC FESTIVAL, Apr. 11-15, IA. Deadline: Dec. 1; Jan 16; final Feb 1. A competitive fest showcasing short documentaries. Length of entries is limited to 30 min.. Festival seeks short documentaries of 30 min or less. The definition of a "documentary" is open to wide interpretation. Founded: 2002. Cats: doc, short. Awards: Cash prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: T. Seeberger; (319) 335-3258; info@ICDocs.org; www.icdocs.org.

INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL OF BOSTON, April 19-24, MA. Deadline: Feb. 10. Fest was created to discover unknown filmmakers, incl. students, first-timers, & int'l directors. Festival specializes in films still seeking distribution. IFFBoston has awarded over \$20,000 worth of prizes to winning films during previous fests, incl. professional services, software packages, & film gear. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, New England Focus, any style or genre. Awards: Best Fiction Feature & Short, Best Doc Feature & Short, Festival Filmmaker, & Audience Choice. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, dv-cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee:

\$10-\$45. Contact: Festival; (857) 891-8693; info@iffboston.org; www.iffboston.org.

INT'L WILDLIFE FILM FESTIVAL, May 13-20, MT. Deadline: Feb. 10. The central focus of fest is to bring awareness to non-domesticated wildlife species & natural habitats. Cats: children, doc, feature, TV, music video, news story. Formats: Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$200. Contact: IWFF; (406)728-9380; fax: 728-2881; iwff@wildlifefilms.org; www.wildlifefilms.org.

LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL, June 16-26, CA. Deadline: Jan. 14; Feb. 18 (final: shorts, music video); March 1 (final: features). Fest showcases the best of American & int'l independent cinema. The fest screens over 80 features & 60 shorts. Fest is widely recognized as a world-class event, uniting emerging filmmakers w/ critics, scholars, film masters, & the movie-loving public. Founded: 1995. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Music Video, Student. Awards: Narrative Competition receives a \$50,000 cash grant, Doc Competition winner receives a \$25,000 cash grant, both funded by Target Stores. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DigiBeta, HD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$50/\$65 (features); \$35/\$45 (shorts); \$20/\$30 (music videos). Contact: Varky James; (310) 432-1208; lafilmfest@ifp.org; www.lafilmfest.com.

LOWER WEST SIDE FILM FESTIVAL, April 22-27, NY. Deadline: Feb. 15; March 10 (final). An alternative exhibition opportunity for emerging film artists & multimedia artists. The Festival will feature a minimum of eight screenings showcasing more than 50 alternative filmmakers at Collective: Unconscious & other venues in Lower Manhattan. Works 30 min. or under. Cats: doc, short, animation, experimental, any style or genre. Formats: 1/2", DVD, Mini-DV, 16mm, Super 8. preview VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25; \$35 (final). Contact: Collective: Unconscious; lwsff@weird.org; www.weird.org/LWSFF.

MARYLAND FILM FESTIVAL, May 11-14, MD. Deadline: Feb. 17. MFF will bring a wildly entertaining mix of films from all over the world. Fest incl. "The Guest Host Program", "Advocating for Movies", "Film

Preservation", film screenings, & panel discussions. Fest strives to have an "experience that is fun—celebrating the whole film culture, w/ no distinction between types of films...a great movie is a great movie." Cats: feature, short, doc, experimental, animation, open category. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$50. Contact: MFF; (410) 752-8083; fax: (410) 752-8273; info@mdfilmfest.com; mdfilmfest@pcbank.net; www.mdfilmfest.com.

MEDIA THAT MATTERS FILM FESTIVAL, On-going, NY. Deadline: Jan. 6. Seeking films on Food Politics, Criminal Justice, Elections, LGBT Rights, Youth Activism, Health Advocacy, Racial Justice, Human Rights, HIV/AIDS & more Cats: any style or genre, short, doc, experimental, animation, music video, youth media, PSA, Interactive Online Project. Awards: Sixteen winners get an int'l distribution deal- DVD, broadcast, web streaming & hundreds of community screenings. Plus many films get cash awards. Formats: DVD, DigiBeta, Beta SP. 8 min preview. Entry Fee: \$20, Students no fee. Contact: Wendy Cohen; (646)230-6288; fax: 230-6328; wendy@artseengine.net; www.MediaThatMattersFest.org.

METHOD FEST INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, March 31-April 7, CA. Deadline: Dec. 5; Jan 26 (final). Named for the 'Stanislavski Method,' fest highlights the great performances of independent film. Seeking story driven films w/ outstanding acting performances. Founded: 1999. Cats: Feature, Short, student. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DV, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Student: \$25; Shorts: \$30, \$40 (final); Features: \$40, \$50 (final). Contact: c/o Franken Enterprises; (310) 535-9230; fax: 535-9128; Don@methodfest.com; www.methodfest.com.

NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS, March 22-April 2, NY. Deadline: Jan. 8. Highly regarded non-competitive series presented by Film Society of Lincoln Center & Museum of Modern Art. Fest presents average of 23 features & 15 shorts each yr. at MOMA. About 900 entries submitted. No cats; all genres & lengths considered. Shorts presented w/ features. Fest is well publicized; all programs reviewed in New York Times & Village Voice. Entries must have been completed w/in pre-

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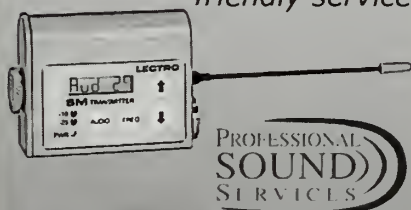
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vious yr & be NY premieres w/ no prior public exhibition. Founded: 1972. Cats: TV, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Awards: None. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Digital Video. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Sara Bensman, Film Coordinator; (212) 875-5638; fax: 875-5636; festival@filmlinc.com; www.filmlinc.com.

NEWARK BLACK FILM FESTIVAL, June 28-Aug 2, NJ. Deadline: April 1 (Fest deadline); Feb. 20 (Robeson Award, Juried Competition). This fest aims to provide a progressive public forum for hundreds of emerging writers, directors, producers, performers, & film buffs who enjoy African American & African Diaspora cinema. Screening in the summer months (Wed), the films shown reflect the full diversity of the black experience in America, both past & present. Each film selection encompasses a wide range of cinematic forms & formulas, from documentary to the avant-garde. Cats: Doc, Experimental, Animation, Feature. Awards: cash awards. Formats: 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35 (Robeson competition). Contact: Pat Faison; (973) 596-6493; fax: (973) 642-0459; pfaison@newarkmuseum.org; www.newarkmuseum.org/nbfff/.

NEWFEST: NEW YORK LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, & TRANSGENDER GAY FILM FESTIVAL, June 1-11, NY. Deadline: Dec. 23; Feb. 20 (final). This fest is committed to presenting diverse & culturally inclusive programs, & showcases all genres of film & video in the interest of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, or transgendered persons. Founded: 1989. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short. Awards: Jury awards for Best Narrative Feature, Best Feature Doc & Best Short, Audience Awards. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: Basil Tsiokos; (212) 571-2170; fax: 571-2179; info@newfest.org; www.newfest.org.

OUTFEST: THE LOS ANGELES GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, July 6-17, CA. Deadline: Jan. 27; March 10 (final). The mission of Outfest is to "build bridges among audiences, filmmakers & the entertainment industry through the exhibition of high-quality gay,

lesbian, bisexual & transgender themed films & videos, highlighted by an annual fest, that enlighten, educate & entertain the diverse communities of Southern California." Fest also offers a weekly screening series yr. round, as well as a screenwriting lab. Lab dates: July 12-14, Lab deadline: Jan. 26. Founded: 1982. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Experimental, script. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: Features (over 50 min.): \$25, \$35 (final); Shorts: \$15, \$25 (final); Screenwriting Lab \$25. Contact: Festival; (213) 480-7088; fax: 480-7099; programming@outfest.org; www.outfest.org.

PALM BEACH INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 20-27, FL. Deadline: Feb. 1. Festival showcases over 80 American & Int'l independent features, shorts & documentaries. Set in Florida's tropical playground, fest gatherings range from stimulating seminars to casual beach parties & a black tie affair hosting some of top names in the film industry. Founded: 1996. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, experimental. Awards: Audience & Best of awards. Formats: 35mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30-\$70. Contact: Festival; (561) 362-0003; fax: 362-0035; info@pbfilmfest.org; www.pbfilmfest.org.

PORTLAND DOC & EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, April 26-30, OR. Deadline: Dec. 16; Jan. 20 (final). PDX is a five-day exposition dedicated to showcasing new innovative film & video. Focusing on non-narrative works "going against the grain of mainstream entertainment," the PDX Film Festival is looking for "artistic, underground, quirky & challenging work that reflects contemporary culture, documents historic oddities, & is otherwise unclassifiable." Cats: doc, short, experimental, underground. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: Peripheral Produce/PDX Film Fest; pdxfilmfest@peripheralproduce.com; www.peripheralproduce.com.

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L LGBT FILM FESTIVAL: Frameline 30, June 15-25, CA. Deadline: Dec. 23; Jan 27 (final). Fest one of the oldest & most respected, is committed to screening the best in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Film. Many works premiered in

fest go on to be programmed or distributed nat'lly & int'lly. Rough cuts accepted for pre-view if submitted on 1/2". Fest produced by Frameline, nonprofit arts organization dedi-cated to gay & lesbian media arts. Founded: 1976. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, experimental. Awards: Frameline Award, Audience Award, 1st Feature Award (\$10,000), Excellent Doc Award (\$10,000). Formats: 35mm, 1/2", Beta, 16mm, BETA cam SP- NTSC only. VHS- NTSC/PAL. Entry Fee: \$15-35. Contact: Program Coordinator; (415) 703-8650; fax: 861-1404; info@frame-line.org; www.frameline.org.

SEATTLE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 25-June 18, WA. Deadline: Dec. 1; Jan. 1; Feb. 1 (final). SIFF is the largest film fest in the US, presenting more than 200 features & 80 short films to an audience of over 150,000 filmgoers each year. Fest is one of five N. American film fests in which presentation will qualify a film w/out distribution for sub-mission to the Independent Spirit awards. Founded: 1976. Cats: feature, doc, short, ani-mation. Awards: \$22,500 in cash prizes; Best American Independent Film, Best New Director (Int'l), Best Short Film & audience-based Golden Space Needle, given for fea-ture film, director, actress, actor, doc, & shorts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$90. Contact: SIFF; (206) 264-7919; fax: 264-7919; entries@seattlefilm.org; www.seattlefilm.org.

ROCHESTER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 4-6, NY. Deadline: Dec. 1; Feb. 14 (final). Annual fest is the longest-running film event dedicated to the art of short film & video (30 min max). Award winners screened at George Eastman House, Int'l Museum of Photography & Film. Founded: 1959. Cats: any style or genre, short, No music videos or installations. Formats: 16mm, 1/2", 35mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$40 (final). Contact: Movies on a Shoestring, Inc; (585) 234-7411; President@RochesterFilmFest.org; www.RochesterFilmFest.org.

RURAL ROUTE FILM FESTIVAL, July 20-24, NY. Deadline: Jan. 15; March 10 (final). Festival has been created to highlight works that deal w/ rural people & places. Works that incl. alternative country, country western &

folk music are encouraged. For the on tour Rural Route Film Festival, please email film-fest@ruralroutefilms.com w/TOUR Request in the subject heading & contact info in the text. Founded: 2002. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta, mini-DV, DVD. preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$30-45 (final) fea-tures (40 min plus); \$10-20 (final) shorts. Contact: Alan Webber; (718) 389-4367; film fest@ruralroutefilms.com; www.ruralroute films.com.

SALT LAKE ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL, April 13-16, UT. Deadline: Feb. 4. The goal of the SLAP Film Festival is to not only create more awareness of the Asian Pacific film industry but to also let the public have fun & watch free films. Any genre as long as the film is Asian or Pacific related. Founded: 1999. Cats: any style or genre. Contact: Lansia Wann c/o Karen Kwan; 801-581-8157; slapfilmfesti val@yahoo.com; geocities.com/slapfilmfes tival/.

SAN FRANCISCO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL, July 20 - Aug. 7, CA. Deadline: Feb. 14 (final). The San Francisco Jewish Film Festival show-cases new independent American & int'l Jewish-subject cinema. The Festival pres-ents dramatic, documentary, experimental, & animated features & shorts about Jewish history, culture, & identity. Filmmakers need not be Jewish; films selected by subject. Founded: 1981. Cats: doc, experimental, ani-mation, feature, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (final). Contact: Leo Wong; (415) 621-0556 xt. 302; fax: 621-0568; jewish film@sfjff.org; leo@sfjff.org; www.sfjff.org.

SARASOTA FILM FESTIVAL, March 31- April 9, FL. Deadline: Feb. 6 (final). A program of 85 independent & int'l narrative & documentary films plus shorts, sidebars, premieres, par-ties & symposiums. Fest aims to "support & encourage the filmmaker by supplying essential networking opportunities & open dialogue w/ intelligent consumers of film". Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: Feature: \$30, \$50 (final); short: \$20-\$35 (final); Student: \$10, \$30 (final). Contact: Max Burke-Phillips; (941) 364-9514; fax: (941) 364-8411; max@sarasotafilmfesti val.com; www.sarasotafilmfestival.com.

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SILVERDOCS: AFI/DISCOVERY CHANNEL DOC FILM FESTIVAL, June 13-18, MD. Deadline: Jan. 27; March 3 (final). Showcasing over 80 of the best new feature & short documentaries from around the world. A 3-Day Int'l Doc Conference- pitch to dozens of buyers & program executives. All in Washington, DC, where politics, arts & media converge. Cats: doc, any style or genre. Awards: Awards totaling over \$30,000 in cash & prizes.. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (short), \$30 (feature); \$30 (short, final), \$35 (feature final). Contact: Festival; (301)495-6776; fax: 495-6777; info@silverdocs.com; www.silverdocs.com or Withoutabox.com.

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L LGBT FILM FESTIVAL: Frameline 30, June 15-25, CA. Deadline: Dec. 23; Jan. 27 (final). Fest one of the oldest & most respected, is committed to screening the best in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Film. Rough cuts accepted for preview if submitted on 1/2". Fest produced by Frameline, nonprofit arts organization dedicated to gay & lesbian media arts. Founded: 1976. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, experimental. Awards: Frameline Award, Audience Award, 1st Feature Award (\$10,000), Excellent Doc Award (\$10,000). Formats: 35mm, 1/2", Beta, 16mm, BETA cam SP- NTSC only. VHS- NTSC/PAL. Entry Fee: \$15-35. Contact: Program Coordinator; (415) 703-8650; fax: 861-1404; info@frameline.org; www.frame-line.org.

USA Film Festival / Nat'l Short Film & Video Competition, April 20-April 27, TX. Deadline: Shorts: Feb. 1; March 1 (final); Features: March 1. Film Fest features the "best new U.S. & foreign films, special tributes & retros, the 28th Annual Nat'l Short Film & Video Competition, & more (50+ visiting filmmakers in attendance w/ 75+ films)." Within the Film Fest is the Short Film & Video competition open to US made works only, is administered by an independent nat'l jury of film experts, & is an Academy-qualified program (in the fiction, animation & experimental cats). Founded: 1969. Cats: short, feature, experimental, animation. Awards: Cash Prizes; Jury Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC) & DVD. Entry Fee: \$0-\$50 (final). Contact: Festival; (214) 821-6300; fax: 821-6364; info@usafilmfestival.com; www.usafilmfestival.com.

UNITED STATES SUPER 8MM FILM & DIGITAL VIDEO FESTIVAL, February 17-19, NJ. Deadline: Jan. 20. Annual fest encourages any genre, but work must have predominantly originated on Super 8 film or hi-8 or digital video. Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC has sponsored seven touring programs, culled from fest winners for the past several years, which have travelled extensively & seen new audiences. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: \$4,000 in cash & prizes; selected winners go on Best of Fest Int'l Tour. Formats: Hi8, super 8, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4", DV, 8mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (check or money order payable to Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC). Contact: A.G. Nigrin; (732) 932-8482; fax: 932-1935; njmac@aol.com; www.njfilmfest.com.

INTERNATIONAL

BANFF WORLD TELEVISION FESTIVAL, June 11-14, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 28. This fest is Canada's premier int'l event for program makers & content creators in television & new media. Founded: 1979. Cats: See Website for Full List. Awards: Sculptures; Global TV Grand Prize, \$50,000; NHK President's Prize, \$25,000 (project shot or postproduced on HDTV); Telefilm Canada Prizes, two \$20,000 awards for the Best Independent Canadian Production in English & in French. Formats: Beta, Beta SP VHS (NTSC or PAL); DVD. Entry Fee: \$250 (U.S.

or Canadian dollars); \$100 (original content created for webcasting, w no prior or simultaneous appearance in another medium). Contact: Festival; (403) 678-1216; fax: 678-9269; info@achillesmedia.com; www.bwtfv.com.

CANADIAN FILM CENTRE'S WORLDWIDE SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, June 13-18, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 24. Competitive event held in Toronto. The Festival is dedicated to celebrating & exposing audiences to the exciting world of short film, & is the "largest Festival of this kind in North America." The Festival is accredited by the Academy Awards, winners of the Best Animated & Best Live-Action Short awards can be nominated for an Oscar. Cats: short, doc, animation, experimental, music video. Awards: \$125,000 in cash & prizes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. VHS. Entry Fee: 15-50. Contact: Festival; (416) 445-1446 ext. 312; fax: (416) 445-9481; shortfilmfest@cdfilmcentre.com; www.worldwideshortfilmfest.com.

GOLDEN PRAGUE INT'L TELEVISION FESTIVAL, May 7-11, Czech Republic. Deadline: Feb. 28 (forms); Mar. 15 (preview tapes). Seeks music & dance focused television programs more than five min. in length in the following competitive cats: music or dance programs made for television; classical, jazz, & world music or dance programs adapted for television; documentary programs; & live recordings of performances. Awards: 5000 Euros. Formats: 1/2", DigiBeta. VHS. Entry Fee: 10-150 Euros. Contact: Festival; (42) 2 6113 7014; fax: (42) 2 6113 7124; goldenprague@czech-tv.cz; www.czech-tv.cz.

INSIDE OUT: TORONTO LESBIAN & GAY FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 18-28, Canada. Deadline: Jan. 16. Fest hosts the largest lesbian & gay fest in Canada & one of the largest in the world. Founded: 1991. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student, youth media, family, children, TV. Awards: Awards are given for both local & int'l work; more than \$5,000 in cash & prizes is awarded annually. Formats: 16mm, Beta, 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Kathleen Mullen; (416) 977-6847; fax: 977-8025; inside@insideout.on.ca; Website: www.insideout.on.ca.

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val@shortfilm.com; www.shortfilm.com;.

MARSEILLES INT'L FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL VIDEO, France. Deadline: Mar. 1. a.k.a Festival Images Contre Nature, seeks video works that "give more importance to the nature of the vanishing image than to the content" & that deal w/ themes of time, erceton, space, or movement. Formats: S-VHS, Mini-DV, DVD. VHS. Contact: Festival; (33) 49 142 2175; fax: (33) 49 142 2175; icn@p-silo.org; p-silo.org.

OBERHAUSEN INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, May 5-10, Germany. Deadline: Jan. 15. The world's oldest short film fest offers a forum for aesthetic & technological innovation & reflection. There are no limits as to form or genre but films in the Int'l & Children's & Youth Competitions must not exceed 35 min. & have been made after Jan. 1 of the previous year. Founded: 1954. Cats: Short, Any style or genre, Children, Music Video. Awards: Prizes worth a total of 37,500 EURO (approx. \$46,000). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP/PAL, DV, S-VHS, Super 8, DVD. VHS, S-VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Melanie Piguel, Coordinator; 011 49 208 825 2652; fax: 49 208 825 5413; info@kurzfilmtage.de; www.kurz-
filmtage.de.

SKIP CITY INT'L D-CINEMA FESTIVAL, July 15-23, Japan. Deadline: Feb. 17th. Fest celebrates the growing possibilities & rising talents powered by cutting-edge technology. The main program showcases the new wave of digital productions. Cats: feature, short, any style or genre, animation, experi-

mental, doc. Awards: A total of 150,000 Yen in awards. Formats: Most Digital formats, DVD, Mini-DV, 1/2". Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 81 48 263 0818; fax: 011 81 262 5635; info@skipcity-dcf.jp; www.skipcity-dcf.jp.

TORONTO DOC FORUM, May 3-4, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 1. Part of the Hot Docs Canadian Int'l Doc Festival. An unprecedented North American market opportunity to locate financing for your social, cultural & political documentary one-offs & limited series. Based on the prestigious FORUM in Amsterdam. Two days. 36 Pitching slots. 40+ Int'l Commissioning Editors Preview on VHS. Contact: Michelle McLean; 416-203-2155 ext. 288; www.hotdocs.ca. Toronto Jewish Film Festival, April 20-28, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 1. Second largest Jewish film fest in North America. Fest is devoted to chronicling the diversity of Jewish life & experiences from around the world. Founded: 1993. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: Beta SP, 16mm, 35mm, VHS (Secam, PAL). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: no entry fee. Contact: Shlomo Schwartzberg, Dir. of Programming; 416-324-9316; fax: 416-324-9415; tjff@interlog.com; www.tjff.com.

YORKTON SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 25-28, Canada. Deadline: Feb. 15. Longest running fest of its kind in Canada. Awards avail. in 18 genre cats, 16 craft cats. Festival incl. public screenings, mini cinema, workshops & activities. Cats: Doc, Children, short. Awards: The Golden Sheaf Award. Formats: 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: CAN \$75. Contact: Festival; (306) 782-7077; fax: (306) 782-1550; info@yorkton-shortfilm.org; www.yorktonshortfilm.org.

VUES D'AFRIQUE, April 20-30, Canada. Deadline: Jan. 31. Fest, founded in 1983, is an important showcase for films from Africa & diaspora. Categories include: African & Creole docs, World View, Canadian Vision, Expositions Info Kiosks, Music, Dance, & Literature. Founded: 1983. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, African/diaspora, animation, TV. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$7 (Canadian). Contact: Aurielle Tchetchenigbo; (514) 284-3322 xt228; fax: (514) 845-0631; info@vuesdafrique.org; www.vuesdafrique.org.

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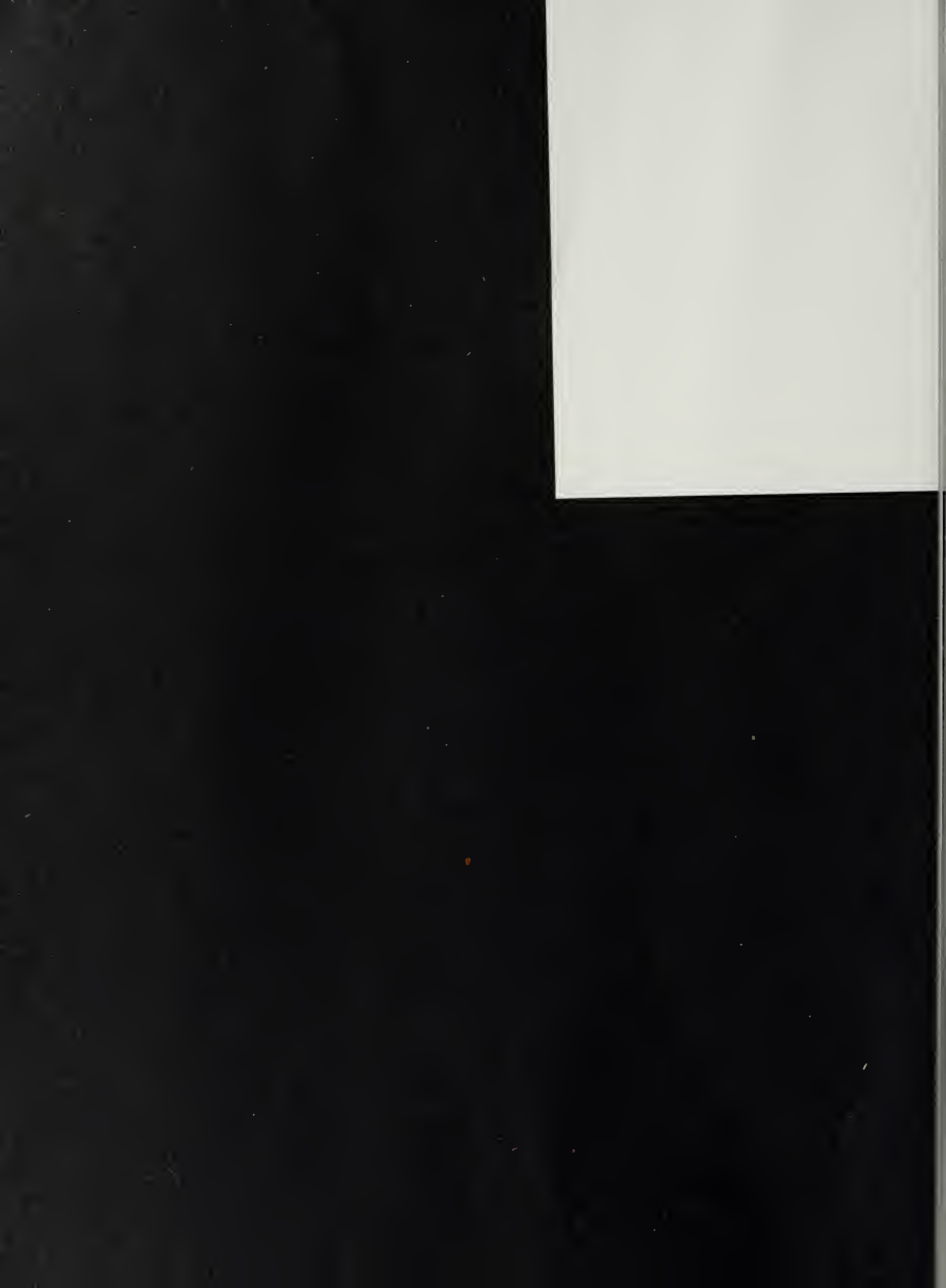
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NOTICES

By Erica Berenstein

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. The Independent reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aifv.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by The Independent or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

COMPETITIONS

ALWAYS INDEPENDENT FILMS shows independent feature films, short films, docs & animation. In addition, AIF features original made-for-Internet content as well as on line film festivals. www.alwaysif.com.

SHORT FILM SLAM, NYC's only weekly short film competition, is looking for submissions. Competition on Sundays at 2 p.m. At the end of each show the audience votes for a winning film, which receives further screenings at the Pioneer Theater. To enter, you must have a film, 30 min. or less, in a 35mm, 16mm, BetaSP, VHS, or DVD format. To submit your film, stop by the Pioneer Theater (155 E. 3rd St.) during operating hours, call (212) 254-7107, or visit www.twoboots.com/pioneer for more information.

APPLAUSE SCREENWRITING COMPETITION calling for original works of an author or authors and not previously optioned, purchased, or produced. Adaptations (no documentaries) are welcome provided the author assumes sole legal responsibility for obtaining copyrights to the adapted work. Prizes: Script submission to agents, managers, producers, lunch with Hollywood execs, exposure and promotion packages, coverage, script critiques, software, magazines, and other great product prizes. For more info visit www.applause4you.com.

DRAMA GARAGE seeks completed and original feature-length screenplays that do not exceed 120 pages and have limited camera

angles. If chosen, you'll receive a fully produced, staged reading of your screenplay in Hollywood, referrals, contacts, and much more. Please visit www.dramagarage.com or call 323-993-5700 for more information.

CONFERENCES/ WORKSHOPS

"CREATIVE DEMOLITION," The 52nd Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, curated by Ariella Ben-Dov and Steve Seid, will be held at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, June 17-24 2006. Register online at www.flahertyseminar.org. Fellowships, with a partial fee reduction, are available. Regional Fellowships, with a full fee waiver, may also become available. Deadline: March 20 2006. See website for more details or e-mail ifs@flahertyseminar.org.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS: offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Nonprofit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made. Contact: (212) 319-2910 x. 9.

24TH STREET WRITERS GROUP seeking new members - Monday Nights. Well established Manhattan based screen writing group is seeking committed new members for Monday evening meetings. If interested in being considered for membership, please send a 30 page writing sample in PDF format to the24thstwriters@aol.com.

PUBLICATIONS

DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO, organized by Int'l Media

Resources Exchange, seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info, contact Roselly Torres, LAVA, 124 Washington Pl., NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108; imre@igc.org.

DEEP FOCUS: A REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA

What are the contours of this decade's emerging media landscape? How can makers, funders and organizations adapt to opportunities and challenges distinctive to this new environment? In this far-reaching new report six leading independent media organizations partner with Global Business Network to take a bold, provocative look at the future. Free to members and available for purchase at www.namac.org.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

THE FLEISHACKER FOUNDATION Offers \$1,000-\$10,000 biannually to support works by San Francisco Bay artists that are in post-production in film, video and media arts projects. Priority will be given to new works and projects with a good chance of being completed. Students are ineligible. The annual operating budget must be between \$100,000- \$750,000 annually. Deadline is July 15th and January 15th For more information, visit: www.fleishackerfoundation.org

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues,

especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: To Challenge Stereotypes - We support the creation of art that reflects the full diversity and complexity of women's lives. To Increase Opportunities - We advocate for women artists to be paid fairly and to have more opportunities to make a living from their creative work. To learn more about our work, and to sign up to receive these funding newsletters, visit our web page at: www.WomenArts.org.

THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION, which supports individual women artists, arts programs, and arts organizations in the Greater Philadelphia region, has announced the Art and Change Grants provide immediate, short-term grants of up to \$2,500 to women artists in the Philadelphia region who need financial assistance to take advantage of opportunities for art and change. The artist's opportunity for change must be supported by or be in collaboration with a Change Partner — a person, organi-

zation, or business that is providing the opportunity or is a part of the opportunity in some way. Eligible Change Partners include mentors, editors, galleries, community art spaces, theaters, nonprofit organizations, film studios, and clubs. (Art and Change Grant Deadlines: April 11, June 20, and October 31, 2005.) Visit the Leeway Foundation Web site for grantmaking guide lines and application forms.

MICROCINEMAS / SCREENINGS

FILM AND VIDEO 825 - Series of bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. In a city dominated by Hollywood, venues such as ours become a necessity for artists working in time-based media that is outside the mainstream of narrative cinema. Our curatorial vision is open to both shorts and features in experimental, performance, animation, and documentary forms. Film

/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652-8272, F: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html

ROOFTOP FILMS Submit your movies! We are currently accepting films for our 10th anniversary season, the 2006 Summer Series. We want motion that tell us about where you live and how you live, and we seek independent movies with original ideas, of production values. We accept films of all genres and lengths. The festival consists of weekly shows in parks, along piers, in historical locations or on rooftops in New York City. Curators encouraged to submit entire programs of films. For information, please visit www.rooftopfilms.com or email Dan Nuxoll, programming director, at submit@rooftopfilms.com.

SQUEAKY WHEEL's long-running free open screening is one of our most popular pro-

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**SELLING YOUR
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**SELLING YOUR
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Innes Smolansky, entertainment attorney and producers' rep moderates the *essential* with local industry players and representatives. In Brief provides the platform to get questions answered and advice to help you get it made.

www.aivf.org

grams: second Wednesday of Every Month 8pm! Free! Filmmakers, video/sound/digital artists, community documentarians, and students of all ages are welcome to bring short works for insightful critique. The open screening is perfect for newly created works or works in progress. Bring works less than 15 minutes. Call ahead to screen a longer work. We created some new mini-themes (you don't have to make work on the theme, but if it inspires you, go ahead) to get more people in the door! Formats accepted: Super 8, 16mm, video (mini-dv, svhs, vhs), cassettes, cds, Mac compatible cd-rom. Please visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html #ongoing for more information.

BROADCAST / CABLECAST

AXLEGREASE PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE SHOW: Tuesdays at 2:00 PM on Channel 20. Become part of current media making history and submit your media work to be shown on TV, on our legendary public access cable show. Commercial free, 100% media art TV. Provide us with mini-dv, vhs, svhs, or 8mm video (ntsc) tapes with a running time of 28 min. or less. Your work may also be displayed in our storefront window. Your entry will become a part of our Member Viewing Library unless you include an SASE. Axlegrease is open to local and international artists. Send tapes Attention: Axlegrease. Formats accepted: mini-dv, s-vhs, vhs or dvd. Please visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.

OPEN SCREENINGS Second Wednesday of Every Month 8pm! Free! Squeaky Wheel's long-running free open screening is one of our most popular programs. Filmmakers, video/sound/digital artists, community documentarians, and students of all ages are welcome to bring short works for insightful critique. The open screening is perfect for newly created works or works in progress. Bring works less than 15 minutes. Call ahead to screen a longer work. We created some new mini-themes (you don't have to make work on the theme, but if it inspires you, go ahead) to get more people in the door! Formats accepted: Super 8, 16mm,

video (mini-dv, svhs, vhs), cassettes, cds, Mac compatible cd-rom.

THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL is a new digital cable channel dedicated to airing, exclusively, the works of the independent documentary filmmaker. There isn't a single type of documentary that they will not show, and they are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. See the website for submission instructions. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or email programs@documentarychannel.com

DUTV: A progressive, nonprofit educational channel in Philadelphia seeks works by indie producers. All genres & lengths considered. Will return tapes. BetaSP, DV, dvd accepted for possible cablecast. Contact: Debbie Rudman, DUTV, 3141 Chestnut St., Bldg 9B, Rm 0016, Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927; dutv@drexel.edu; www.dutv.org.

GET YOUR FILM SHOWN ON SKY! Propeller TV is the new national channel for film and television talent, to launch in the new year on SKY. The Film First strand of the channel is looking for short films to be considered for broadcast. They can be any length and genre. You don't have to be Spielberg to be considered for the channel, you could be an independent filmmaker or even a community-based group. Please send films on DVD for broadcast consideration to: John Offord, Propeller TV, c/o Screen Yorkshire, 46 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7EY john@propellertv.co.uk (0)7724 243680.

WIRESTREAM FILMSEARCH seeks films for broadcast. WireStream Productions, in Co-operation with WireStream networks, is seeking independent films and television series for broadcast. Genre welcome include Drama, Comedy, SciFi, Fantasy, Nonfiction/Reality and Educational films and series, suitable for general/mature audiences. All entries must be available for all rights worldwide. Entries previously presented are eligible subject to confirma-

tion of rights. Submit entries to Wayne Hicks, Executive Producer, via email to wayne@wirestreamproductions.com, or by Parcel Post to WireStream Productions, 3005B W.Hwy 76, Branson MO 65616.

WEBCAST

FILMFIIGHTS.COM democratic filmfestival that anyone can enter, 3 times a month. We filmfight every ten days of the month (the 10th, 20th, and 30th) and submissions are due 1 day before the fight—given a title or genre, the submissions are voted on through the website. The winner is the winner and goes into the archives, and their video sits front and center until the next winner is crowned, along with a little blurb about whatever they feel like. Please visit the website for a complete list of guidelines: <http://filmfights.com/submit.shtml>.

KNOWITALLVIDEO created an online video community aimed at world's largest user-generated video collection. With an exhaustive list of categories covering every conceivable subject, any wannabe star or director with a camera can easily upload short-form digital videos for an unlimited audience of Internet and wireless PDA users who search the site by key word or category, all completely free of charge—equal parts talent showcase and information resource. For more information please visit www.knowitallvideo.com.

WWW.VIDEOART.NET is looking for new filmmakers, video artists, producers, etc. to post their clips into a searchable database. Registration is free. We're also interested in learning about your work, new links, trends, equipment, and general film dialogue in the forums. A great opportunity to showcase your talents and discuss your work in the forums.

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Work Wanted

By Erica Berenstein

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AMAZEFILMS is constantly looking for feature films and short films to include in its programming. We welcome filmmakers and writers to send us their work for consideration free of charge. If you feel that your short film, feature film or documentary film that you have produced would make a good addition to the AmazeFilms programming, please fill out the film submission form: www.amazefilms.com/submissions.

ATOMFILMS brings you all the best shorts – animation, comedy, action, sci-fi, drama, and more! There are lots of places to post your film or animation on the Web—but there is only one AtomFilms. Filmmakers around the world know us as the place to go to get discovered, get paid, and make more movies. Do you have a short film or animation that we should see? www.atomfilms.com/submit/

HOLLYWOOD GATEWAY SCREENWRITING

CONTEST: The mission of the Hollywood Gateway Screenwriting Contest is to guide aspiring writers to their success through opportunity, mentoring and unparalleled access to Hollywood decision makers. \$5,000 Cash prize and an initial 12-month option agreement against a potential \$100,000 purchase price, among other prizes. Early Entries February 28th, 2005 - Special Early Bird Entry Cost \$35.00. Contest Deadline April 30th, 2005 - Entry Cost \$40.00 Late Entry June 30th, 2005 - Entry Cost \$50.00. Type of Material: Screenplays 80-140 pages. International entries written in English are welcome. For more information go to www.hollywoodgateway.com/details.php

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documentary that they will not show, and they are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. See the website for submission instructions. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or email programs@documentarychannel.com

COMEDY EXPRESS TV seeks funny films under 7 min. to show and promote on television. We will show, onscreen, the credits and contact information for the filmmakers, including your 15,000! Please look at our website www.comedyexpress.tv which gives more background as well as the online release which MUST accompany all submissions. Contact: Adam Gilad 9229 Sunset Blvd LA CA 90069 adamgilad@mac.com 310 271 0023.

MACHINE DREAMS is developing a series of theatrical shows for national audiences that will involve original music, movies, movie shorts, animations, games, graphics and art. We are conducting a global search for the best ORIGINAL independent material in the following categories: Social Commentary & Societal Issues, Humor and Satire, Special Effects, Interactive "No Death" Gaming, Great Media in any form (music, music video, movie, movie shorts, animation, games, graphics, art) We plan to incorporate your work in one or more of the following ways: 1. Include it in a juried show in New York City, with winners receiving recognition and cash prizes and airing on a network television show, 2. Include it in one or more interactive shows in New York City, 3. Include it in distribution across movie theatres, DVD, web, television, cable, satellite or radio broadcast. Email a BRIEF DESCRIPTION to us of your work: kate@machine

dreams.com DO NOT SEND US YOUR WORK YET. For more information call Kate Lawson at 612-371-4428 x11.

SMOGDANCE, the Seventh Annual Pomona Film Festival, wants to see your cinematic statement. Our Smogdance '04 committee is already up and running. Contact us if you'd like to be a part of the Inland Empire's most exciting and eclectic film event. Submission Deadline: December 15, 2005 Festival Date: January 21, 2005 — January 23, 2005 Smogdance '04. (909) 629-9797, FX: (909) 629-8697, smogdance@hotmail.com.

TIME:BASE is a curated exhibition of time-based media and art at Boley, an 8,000 sq ft. former bank in downtown Kansas City. Emphasis for 2006 May-June show is site-specific work and installation. Video, film, audio, installation, interactive art or performance of any type also considered. Send CD, DVD, VHS, URL or detailed proposal with entry form (www.time-base.org) to: time:base, 5100 Rockhill Rd Haag 202, Kansas City MO 64110. Tel/816/235-1708; time-base@hotmail.com.

THE WAVES Committee announces the call for entries for the 5th WAVES Asian/American Film Festival, scheduled to run April 14th - April 16th, 2006. Filmmakers are encouraged to access comprehensive information and eligibility requirements and to complete the entry form online at the WAVES Web site, www.uiowa.edu/~waves. Discounted Deadline is 5pm CST, Tuesday, January 17, 2006. Final deadline for entries is Friday, February 16th, 2006. Entry forms and eligibility requirements can also be requested by email, uiwaves@yahoo.com.

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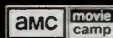
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All workshops are solely owned and operated by the New York Film Academy and are not affiliated with
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THANK YOU

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including The Independent and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:



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AL: Cypress Moon Productions; CA: SJPL Films, Ltd.; CO: CU Film Studies, Pay Reel; CT: Anvil Production; FL: Charter Pictures Entertainment; IL: Shattering Paradigms Entertainment, LLC; MD: NewsGroup, Inc.; TLF Limited Management; MI: Logic Media LLC; MS: Magnolia Independent Film Festival; NY: Entertainment Pro Insurance; Cypress Films; Deutsch/Open City Films; Docurama; Forest Creatures Entertainment; getcast.com; Larry Engel Productions Inc.; Lightworks Producing Group; Mad Mad Judy; Metropolis Film Lab; Missing Pixel; New School University; Off Ramp Films, Inc.; On the Prowl Productions; OVO; Production Central; Range Post; Robin Frank Management; Rockbottom Entertainment, LLC; Talent Solutions; The Outpost; Triune Pictures; United Spheres Production; VA: Karma Communications Film & Video; WA: Two Dogs Barking;

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AR: Henderson State University; CA: Bay Area Video Coalition; California Newsreel; Everyday Gandhis Project; NAATA/Media Fund; NALIP; USC School of Cinema and TV; CO: Denver Center Media; Free Speech TV; CT: Hartley Film Foundation; DC: CINE; Media Access; School of Communication, American University; FL: Miami International Film Festival; University of Tampa; HI: Pacific Islanders in Communications; IL: Community Television Network; Department of Communication/NLU; Kartemquin Films; IN: Fort Wayne Cinema Center; Kansas City Filmmakers Jubilee; KY: Appalshop; MA: CCTV; Documentary Educational Resources; Harvard University, OsCLibrary; LTC; MD: Laurel Cable Network; Silverdocs; AFI Discovery Channel Doc Festival; ME: Maine Photographic Workshop; MI: Ann Arbor Film Festival; MN: IFP/MSP; Walker Art Center; MO: dhTV; Webster University Film Series; NC: Broadcasting/Cinema; Working Films; NE: Nebraska Independent Film Project/AIVF Salon Lincoln; NJ: Black Maria Film Festival; Princeton University. Program in Visual Arts; University of New Mexico; NY: ActNow Productions; Arts Engine; Cornell Cinema; Council for Positive Images, Inc.; Creative Capital Foundation; Crowing Rooster Arts; Dutchess Community College

Student Activites; Educational Video Center; Film Forum; Film Society of Lincoln Center; Firelight Media; International Film Seminars; LMC-TV; Manhattan Neighborhood Network; National Black Touring Circuit; National Black Programming Consortium; National Museum of the American Indian; National Video Resources; New York University, Cinema Studies; New York Women in Film and Television; Parnassus Works; POV/The American Documentary; RIT School of Film and Animation; Squeaky Wheel; Stony Brook Film Festival; Syracuse University; United Community Centers; Upstate Films, Ltd.; Witness; Women Make Movies; OH: Athens Center for Film And Video; Independent Pictures/AIVF Ohio Salon; OR: Media Arts, MHCC; Northeast Film Center; The Oregon Film & Video Foundation; PA: American INSIGHT, Inc.; TeamChildren.com; RI: Flickers Arts Collaborative; SC: Department of Art, University of South Carolina; South Carolina Arts Commission; TX: Houston Film Commission; Southwest Alternate Media Project; Students of the World; University of Texas RTF; WA: Seattle Central Community College; WI: UWM Dept. of film; Canada: Cinematheque Ouebecoise Musee Du Cinema; France: The Carmago Foundation

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THE LIST

Coming Up Short

By Erica Berenstein



You've been working for months, maybe years, on your script. You've re-written it 47 times. The dénouement is perfect, the dialogue well-crafted. Is there any reason in the world that you might want to chop it up or slim it down? Are there any advantages to turning your 120-page screenplay into a seven-minute short?

"Good question! I would have to say that the advantage would be a good test to see if your stripped down, key ingredients are there, and secondly that the arc is tangible and as strong as it can be, and most importantly, that you have a central theme that can be executed in a micro (short) or macro (feature-length) presentation."

—Renji Philip, writer-director,
An American Dream

"Learning about economy in dialog."

—Tom Hopkins, filmmaker

"I could cut out all the crap I only put in there to raise money for the project in the first place, get rid of the dramatic love triangle situation I didn't really care for and focus on the elements that were important to me when I first began working on the screenplay. Also, I don't have to give a flying furby for the narrative structure. I can take delight in atomizing the little narrative elements that were in there and arrange the little story there now in ways that will bring famine and disease, not to mention the insanity, to the innocent viewer... (shall I really go on?)"

—Thorsten Fleisch, filmmaker

"You make shorts not for some advantage—you make them because you can't help it."

—Signe Baumann, director, *Dentist*

"You get to make it."

—Jason Feuerstein, co-writer/producer, *Happy*

"Usually everybody else is trying to do the opposite, which turns into disasters...most of the time. If you have a good 120-minute script, why should you not get it produced and make a fortune? If it sucks as an 120-minute version, you got the biggest advantage right there: saving you the time and hassle of a feature film production, saving your parents/grandparents a lot of bucks, keeping the audience from boredom with a hopefully entertaining short film that finds and tells the essence of your feature script. Another advantage: in short films: you can do things you would never be allowed to do in a 120-minute film. That's what makes shorts so special. It's a whole new world."

—Holger Ernst, writer/director, *Little Fish*, *Rain is Falling*,
The House is Burning

"We did not have the money or human resources to make a great feature. Young directors and producers overstep their bounds making first features and wind up not delivering. People think the money is not that much different, so why not make a feature? But when long scenes need to develop and your actors are mediocre, your movie falls apart. Or we forget that people get annoyed with hand-held DV-cam for two hours. We played the best talents of our limited cast and crew."

Also, most independent films are about 90 minutes too long to begin with. And a strong short can go almost every place a feature can go. We're playing TV and theatrical all over the world and have made almost all our money back."

—Keith Bearden, director, *The Raftman's Razor*

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March 2006

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Girls Play Nice

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talk about partnering up
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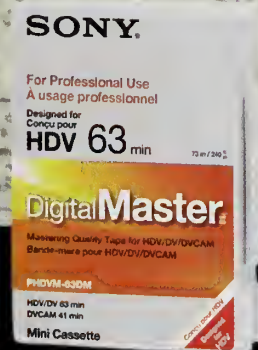
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Cover: Rosario Dawson and Talia Lugacy launch Trybe Films (photograph by Dan Hallman)
Below: Deepa Mehta, whose films challenge the way society views women
(photograph by Devyani Saltzman)



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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE AIVF COMMUNITY FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear AIVF members, *Independent* readers, and other supporters:

AIVF is regrouping and transforming in the months ahead with the leadership of a transitional Board of Directors and a reorganized staff. Guided by a recent organizational assessment that included extensive member feedback, the Board met in early January to begin charting a course for the future. We invite you to join in this process of change.

In short, we want AIVF to become more relevant and responsive to the needs of independent media makers—our current and future members—as they navigate the obstacle course of film financing, distribution, and changing technology. We have heard from our members (more than 500 of you!) that there is a need for AIVF to continue as a supporter and advocate for independent filmmakers but that the organization must change. With diminished finances and an unsustainable operational model, the need for change is clear to the AIVF Board and staff as well.

With the likelihood of a forced shutdown imminent, the Board took steps in January including a reduction in staff and programs and a change in staff leadership. We have embarked on a transition period focused on the following activities:

- Continuing conversations with members (including those who participated in our recent survey and others) to help AIVF re-envision programming and services.

- Creating a business plan to maximize earned income, including opportunities to re-imagine the *Independent* magazine and web/online tools.

- Launching new fundraising activities to rebuild and update the organization by reaching out to members and other supporters in the short-term, while also growing our fundraising systems for the long-term.

- Strengthening AIVF's IT infrastructure and financial management capacity.

- Continuing to develop a future-focused Board that draws strength from AIVF's rich history and is able to lead AIVF in a much-changed world.

- The Independent*, both online and in print, will continue as the voice of the independent field and a point of connection for our community. We are confident that with the new leadership of Editor Shana Liebman, you will

find a strong resource for news, analysis, and advocacy on issues that impact your independence. In the months ahead the Board is committed to working with the staff and our members to increase *The Independent's* resources and reach.

The vision AIVF is working towards includes:

- Serving as the “go to” information resource for independents. AIVF will continue its commitment to providing value-added information that is framed and relevant to the needs of independents—from emerging to experienced artists.

- Fostering community. AIVF will cultivate vibrant virtual and actual communities among independent media makers, working with members and partners to create networking and peer learning opportunities.

- Strengthening the advocacy voice of independents. AIVF will update and amplify its approach to advocacy.

- Becoming truly national in scope: AIVF will become a truly national organization through re-imagining services and programming.

Join us in re-envisioning and rebuilding AIVF! We thank those who have already joined in this effort.

Yours in independence,

The AIVF Transitional Board of Directors

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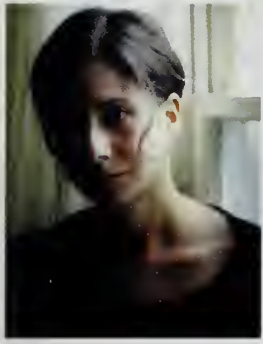
How you can help

Continue your AIVF membership and make an additional financial contribution if possible. Donate online at www.aivf.org or send your check to: AIVF, 304 Hudson St. 6th Floor, New York, NY 10013

Encourage other independent media makers to join AIVF!

Join the newly formed filmmakers committee that is helping with outreach and member-to-member fundraising (check the website for updates)

Lend your expertise! See the website for opportunities to get involved in other work groups to help AIVF transform and rebuild.



Shana Liebman: Editor-in-Chief

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

On my first day at Sundance, I caught an 11:30 am screening of *Half Nelson*, then wandered over to a cheap Mexican joint to eat lunch. Halfway through my chicken burrito, two women approached and asked if they could share my table. I somewhat reluctantly moved my hot sauce to make room. By the end of the meal, however, I had learned more from these two filmmakers than I would in a week at the office.

That pretty much sums up my five days at Sundance—inspiring, educational, eye-opening. Though I have to admit that I was immensely glad when the festival ended. Not that I didn't enjoy seeing some truly great films or the fact that cocktail hour was any—make that *every*—hour, but after being immersed in a such a vigorous and intelligent community, I was—well, exhausted, yes—but more importantly, eager to get back to work. I had a notebook full of article ideas and for the first time in a couple months of minor turmoil at AIVE, I was certain that there was enough love, enough need, for us out there—that we should and would be getting on with it.

So here we are, and it seems somehow fitting that this is the women's issue: Despite or perhaps because of the struggle surrounding it, it turned into a damn good issue.

Doc-maker Rachel Boynton (*Our Brand Is Crisis*) writes about her breath-taking experience in Bolivia, following James Carville and other American political strategists in their campaign to get Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada elected as president. Contributing writer Sarah Coleman talked to the awesome Deepa Mehta about why her films have inspired

death threats and riots in India, and why her new film, *Water*, about Hindu widows, won't wreak any less havoc. We sent "The Reeler," S.T. Van Airsdale, to schmooze it up at the New York Women in Film and Television's 25th awards ceremony, and our fabulous new senior editor, Katherine Dykstra, spent a cold December morning on the set of *Descent*, chatting with Rosario Dawson and her production company partner and good friend, Talia Lugacy. Simone Swink reviews National Geographic's All Roads Festival, the only fest to showcase only indigenous films, and Jonathan Krane's plan for fixing the moviemaking industry, which he outlines in a new book, is thoughtfully critiqued by Ethan Alter.

2005 may have been the year of the masculine movie, but a few outstanding men produced some compelling and well-conceived female characters. Elizabeth Angell talked to these guys about writing the other gender. Vlogging guru Danielle DiGiacomo gives us a glimpse into the video blogging scene and its pioneers—most of whom, interestingly, are women. And Editorial Associate Erica Berenstein takes stock of how far we've come—are women's-only organizations still necessary in the independent film world?

Finally, I want to both introduce and thank the super talented and tireless *Independent* team: Katherine Dykstra, Erica Berenstein, graphic associate-extraordinaire Tim Schmidt, and the savvy Ben Brown—who, as you will see, brilliantly redesigned these pages with an appropriately fresh look.

Thank you also to the ever-impressive Rebecca Carroll, who we're very excited to keep in the loop as editor-at-large, for graciously tossing me the reigns. I'm thrilled to be here. And although this magazine has been around for over 30 years, I still want to hear any and all feedback you've got. Honestly, it's the only way we're going to make some progress.

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
The Independent,
Shana Liebman
Editor-in-Chief

THE independent

FILM AND VIDEO MONTHLY

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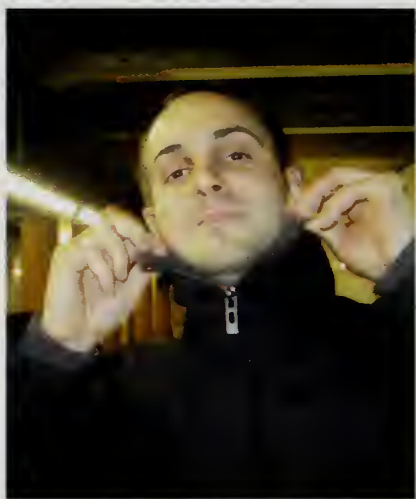
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By Shana Liebman



***The Collector of Bedford Street*, New Day Films, www.newday.com**

The *Hollywood Reporter* called this “the feel good movie of the year” when it was nominated for an Oscar for best documentary short in 2003. Although that kind of generic exuberance—especially for a film about a mentally retarded person—usually makes me skeptical, Alice Elliott’s 40-minute film is really a pleasure. Larry is a 60-something man with the IQ of a small child who lives in Manhattan’s West Village. His “job,” collecting donations from random civilians for various charitable causes, is refreshingly noble and also a little ironic since Larry himself is in desperate need of

some care. Aside from his 80-year-old uncle, who comes over every day to help Larry clean, cook, and process, and his beloved pets, there is no one to help this gentle man cope. Larry becomes suicidal and when he starts inviting homeless men over to keep him company, the co-op board of his building finally takes action—finding, organizing, and funding an assisted living service for him. Elliott kindly and intelligently observes Larry’s journey, managing to let us both feel for him and chuckle without guilt at his goofy, neurotic behavior.

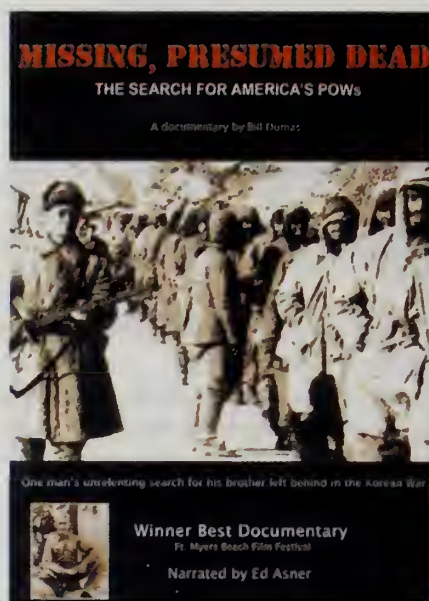
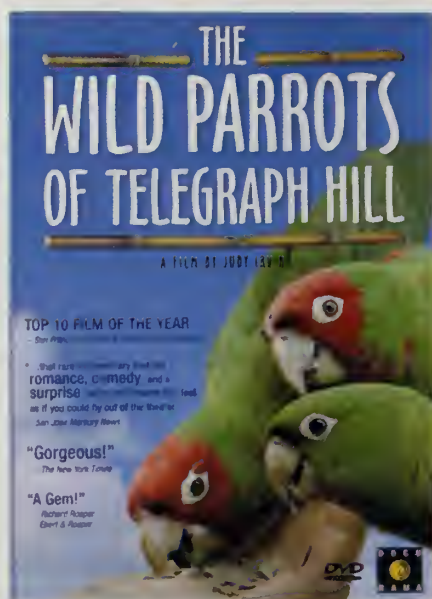
The Lost Tribe, Women Make Movies, www.wmm.com

Ex-Mormon lesbian stand-up comic makes a shocking discovery in Utah. Who wouldn’t pop in that DVD? Sue Ann, an engagingly self-deprecating and somewhat funny comic who was recently excommunicated from the church after she condemned her religion on a national talk show, is invited to be the keynote speaker at a gathering of gay and lesbian Mormons in Salt Lake City. She accepts, but her return home proves more difficult than she anticipated. Memories of her confusing childhood flood back, but more interestingly, she realizes she misses the family that shunned her. We follow Sue Ann’s trip from beginning to end, watch her laugh and cry. It’s moving at times, though ultimately the film lacks drama aside from Sue Ann’s emotions. We don’t really travel out of this isolated experience—and despite the build-up, hanging out with gay Mormons just isn’t all that thrilling.

***The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, Docurama, www.docurama.com**

A few exceptional recent releases—*Grizzly Man*, *March of the Penguins*, *Winged Migration*—have made me rethink my longstanding aversion to nature films. *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, however, does nothing for that case. Mark Bittner, a hippie musician living in San Francisco, has become the self-appointed caretaker of a group of very beautiful and charming parrots who live in the trees in front of his cottage. He talks to them (they all have names), he thinks about them (which ones are dating or fighting or sad) and he nourishes them. He feels strongly about





these rare parrots—he has become a bit of celebrity for his parrot-care, is articulate and intelligent about their needs, behavior, and lifestyle—and we do get a sense of how one could be drawn in by these expressive birds. But unlike *Winged Migration*, in which we get to see the world from the bird's point of view or at least to observe a common creature from an unusual perspective, this film is more about Mark than the parrots. The turning point, when Mark is forced to move away from his birds, is overly melodramatic, and the surprise end, though sweet, confirms the overall sappiness of this adventure.

***Missing, Presumed Dead: The Search for America's POWs*, Choices Video Inc, www.choicesvideo.net**

For the last 50 years, Veteran Bob Dumas has been searching for his brother Roger who

was captured in North Korea. Bob believes his brother may actually still be alive and that the US gave up on Roger and many other missing POWs during the war. Dumas's political crusade is chronicled in this film—including his own presentations to government officials, footage of the senate hearings about missing POWs, and interviews with Bob and other vets. Were there really hundreds of American soldiers left behind? Did the government make a concerted effort to hide evidence of their disappearances? It's a provocative proposition and timely considering activity in Iraq. But it's hard to believe that Dumas's argument is totally sound. At the very end of this film it becomes clear this documentary is really one man's lifelong project, and that the politics and assertions made throughout are therefore somewhat questionable.

***Who Are the Debolts?*, Docurama, www.docurama.com**

This documentary is about a family who adopts 19 children—all disadvantaged or handicapped. It's an odd circus that is immensely watchable, but the film was made in the 70s and although 30 years ago it must have seemed radically revealing, the fatherly voiceover and frequent shots of happy moments now make it feel like propaganda or a child services video. Some kids are blind or have lost limbs or don't speak English, but they all engage in good old American fun. They share chores, go on vacation, and walk to school together. The best parts of this DVD are the extra features: family updates and reports from the future. After so much hokeyness, it's heartening to hear some real stories about how these kids grew up and into the world. ★

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WAM!

WOMEN, ACTION & MEDIA 2006

By Erica Berenstein

"Why do we have to spend so much time talking about these whiny women, again? Why can't we focus on new, more pressing issues?" This is the media's typical reaction to progressive women's voices, according to Jennifer Pozner, founding director of the media analysis, education, and advocacy organization, Women in Media & News (WIMN). "Well," Pozner answers, "because these issues are still pressing...women had about five minutes of attention spent on us culturally in this country and then all of a sudden we're supposed to have won all of our battles."

One of the organizations that came out of those five minutes in the '70s was the Center for New Words, a project that aims to use "the word cycle"—literary writing, blogging, filmmaking, and journalism—to strengthen progressive women's voices. New Words, which opened in 1974, was the oldest continuously operating women's bookstore in the US until it closed its doors in 2002. But unlike the many independent bookstores that fold in the face of mega chains, New Words was able to survive by transforming into a nonprofit literary, educational, and cultural center, which is now gearing up for its third annual conference.

Women, Action & Media 2006 (WAM!), which will run



WAM! 2006's keynote speaker Maria Hinojosa laments that despite more women in positions of power, few women run networks.

from March 31 through April 2 at MIT's Stata Center, will include panels such as "Establishing the Voice and Story of Young Women of Color in Film" and "Start Your Own Blog in 90 Minutes," as well as discussions led by Pozner, filmmaker Elisha Miranda, and a mix of other activists and media makers.

Pozner, who has taken part in all three New Words conferences, believes that the WAM! conference is unique because it shows women how activists and media makers can work together to encourage social change.

"These issues are not going to be solved overnight," says Pozner, but the value of the con-

ference lies in its ability to bring together people in media making and feminist/activist organizations. At last year's conference, Pozner met several women who publish progressive magazines such as *Punk Planet*. Not long after, these women were facilitating the only women's caucus at the National Conference for Media Reform.

WAM! 2006's keynote speaker Maria Hinojosa, author, senior correspondent for "NOW" on PBS, and host of NPR's "Latino USA," believes that, "we are in a moment of evolution in terms of media...past the voice-of-god anchor," and, "almost past the 24-hour news network." But despite the fact that there are more women in positions of power, few women run networks. And although networks want female viewers, "people misinterpret what female viewers want to see... social drama [and] girls being anorexic, I think that comes from a very male-centered place."

Hinojosa says that the hardest part of addressing issues of women in the media is that when talking about sexism, it is impossible to say, "Oh! I experienced it! OK, there we go!" Issues of sexism, she says, "are much more subtle than anybody quite understands." Hinojosa believes that one of the most productive ways to face these issues is to share stories.

Pozner agrees. Her most memorable moment at last year's conference took place at the Howard Johnson where she stayed. Pozner, Elaine Lafferty (then editor-in-chief of *Ms.* magazine), Christine Cobiato (online editor of *Ms.*), and Lisa Jervis (co-founder of *Bitch*) were, "just sitting there talking shop and stories about our work and what we want to accomplish together... at a hotel bar in the middle of the night."

Rad Education

By Erica Berenstein

Unit 1: Lesson 1

Objective: To get cameras into students' hands and to get them excited about making movies. Materials: Video cameras, Shakespearean soliloquy.

In the essay "The Magic of Images: Word and Picture in a Media Age," social critic Camille Paglia laments, "Education has failed to adjust to the massive transformation in Western culture since the rise of electronic media." That sentiment hit home for Kathy Houspian, a teacher in Ohio, who just started using IFC Film School—a new curriculum for high school English students developed by the Independent Film Channel in partnership with Topics Education, a PR firm that helps organizations reach out to the education community. The curriculum is composed of six units that allow English teachers to incorporate film analysis and film production into their lessons.

Houspian says she is a firm believer in using all types of media in the classroom, because,

"it all leads back to storytelling." She values the way the Film School curriculum intellectually engages her students and how it forces them to analyze what they watch, "because they can't just sit there with their mouth open and watch it. They have to think about what is on the screen, and why it was put on the screen, and how it influences you as a watcher."

Gatsby. "Everything you are doing," she says excitedly, "is exactly what an English teacher wants a kid to do with a story...you're trying to get the kids to analyze what they see in front of them." And according to Houspian and the creators of the program, film—sexier than a text book—often engages students who may not participate in tradi-

These clips were produced by IFC partner Ghetto Film School located in the Bronx, which has been teaching filmmaking to high school students since June 2000. Joe Hall, president of GFS, has seen the way filmmaking and cinema motivates kids and gives them an appreciation of film as an art form, as well as an understanding of business

Ghetto Film School students work on short for IFC's Multimedia Glossary.



IFC hopes Film School will be accessible "to a teacher who has never picked up a camera, or who has only been to films at the local multiplex," says Evan Fleischer, IFC's director of marketing and promotions as well as the man in charge of this initiative. The lesson plans are available online and can be used as a whole or in parts. Books and films suggested by the curriculum can be substituted with ones that specifically address a given class's agenda. For example, Houspian is adapting lesson one, which uses a Shakespearean soliloquy, to fit her American literature class's study of *The Great*

tional lessons. The essential goals of the program are to establish the link between film and literature, and to expose students to film as a legitimate academic subject. Other units also include shooting and writing, and the last unit is dedicated to production.

One of the most dynamic components of the website, which has sections for both teachers and students, is the Multimedia Glossary. This dictionary of film terms includes everything from "adaptation" to "zoom shot," though the most impressive entries are those that are accompanied by short clips that illustrate the concepts.

through programs such as GFS's student-run media company, Digital Bodega. Teaching film, he says, inspires kids to use their imagination and to produce their own work in ways that other outreach programs don't. IFC helps teachers prepare their students for a world that is increasingly dominated by the production, interpretation, and dissemination of information through visual media.

Film School can be downloaded at www3.ifctv.com/filmschool.

Hollywood on the Dole

By Nicole Davis

Hollywood may be losing its talent pool to... Albuquerque. A recent report published by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) forecasts that 2006

points out that the success of cable TV shows like "The L Word" and "Entourage," as well as original programming from networks like the Sci-Fi Channel and A&E have made television the darling of Hollywood's bleak

Tonight's view of people in film and television," he says. We tend to see them as rich and fabulous, not eking out a modest living as the majority of a film's workforce — including everyone from its production crews

the film's cost.

"That was the difference between development hell and a green light. That's amazing," he told the *Times*. New Orleans didn't make out so poorly, either. Before Katrina, it had

The view of NYC from Steiner Studios, the largest studio east of LA.



will mean "curtains for jobs" in Tinsel Town.

Not only did last year see box-office sales slump, but DVD sales, once a beacon of hope after a lackluster theatrical run, are down as well. And to make matters worse—or more fair, depending which side you're on—unions like the Screen Actors Guild want a bigger cut of DVD profits, which have dropped in part because of cable TV's video on demand services. (Video on demand, however, has been a boon for independent and foreign filmmakers, exposing home audiences to films that weren't able to secure major distribution.)

The 20-page report also

economic picture. The big unknown, however, is how offering these same shows (and movies) via personal media devices, like the iPod with video, will affect the studios. "New ways of delivering content mean new markets, but also increased risk of piracy," the report hedges.

With tentative forecasts like these, it's hard to believe the dire straits the report predicts for film and television jobs in Hollywood. But as its author, LAEDC's chief economist Jack Kyser, points out, part of the problem lies with our perception of the industry. "People tend to have an 'Entertainment

to its craft service — actually does.

Since California isn't catering to these lower-paid workers, many are finding film work in places like Toronto, New York, and (for a while) New Orleans. As the *LA Times* reported this past summer (and the Defamer picked up soon after with a post titled "New Orleans is the New Hollywood"), the city gave the producer of *Big Momma's House* (2000) two tax incentives to film in the Big Easy. The movie may not be Oscar material, but the money is nothing to sneeze at. By coming to Louisiana, producer David T. Friendly said he trimmed roughly 17 percent off

been attracting more and more actors and actresses, who, incredibly, found it easier to find film work in New Orleans than in Hollywood. The storm wrecked New Orleans' newfound money-maker, but the idea that moviemaking can create ancillary jobs and revenue streams hasn't been lost on towns like Albuquerque, which is planning to build a \$60 million dollar facility for film, TV, and digital media production. And New York, where the new Steiner Studios have endowed the city with the largest studio system east of Los Angeles, is already giving Hollywood a run for its jobs.

"It's a huge operation," agrees



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the dean of New York University's film school, Sheril Antonio, who also attributes the city's increased TV production to the addition of Silvercup Studios a few years ago. As a result of both, she says, "I think it will be a lot easier for young filmmakers to survive in New York. They won't have to go to another coast for entry-level experience as DPs and camera grips."

Ironically, the potential revenue and job creation that comes from a film that's shot in your backyard has been lost on Hollywood.

"There is no tax incentive for filmmakers in California, not for big or low-budget films," says Kyser. The California state congress voted down a \$100 million dollar incentive package for low-budget films last year, in part because they couldn't see the point in subsidizing what seemed to be a perfectly prosperous business. (Again, Kyser blames "Entertainment Tonight" for clouding their vision.) Still, the LAEDC discovered that by the end of 2005, LA County's film and video industry had already lost 15,300, or 10 percent of its jobs. This year, The Governor proposed an incentive package worth \$75 million, but the bill's future—like Hollywood's—is uncertain.

Movie SOS

By Katherine Dykstra

The film is in the can and you're headed into post when wham! You find yourself completely out of scratch. Though disheartening, this scene is not an uncommon one.

"There are quite a few films that run out of money for whatever reason. The funding promises dry up, or there are disputes among the people, artistic or otherwise. Sometimes there's bad management. Sometimes they underestimate what it costs to finish a film," says Mel Klein, the CEO of Avondale Film and Television, a venture created to catch films that fall into just these scenarios. "It occurred to me and to the others that not only is this situation far more common than we assumed, but the films in financial trouble

tend to have additional trouble getting out of the ditch even if the film's been finished. You don't have marketing money, you don't have the ability to bring it out on a firm foot, and that's where the idea of rescuing the film and bringing it to market came to mind."

Debuted at this year's Sundance Film Festival, Avondale Film and Television has committed itself via Unfinishedfilms.com to tending to the completion and distribution needs of "financially troubled" films.

The process begins on the website, where filmmakers fill out a lengthy questionnaire created to determine, among other things, whether the film meets the target budget (in the \$1.5 to \$3 million range) and completion need (under \$500,000).

"The film has to be substantially along its way in photography—we'd like it to be two thirds to three fourths complete," says Klein. "We're not looking at films that need 80 percent of their financing, we're looking for films that have 80 percent and need that last little bit. We're looking for films that are bigger than three guys and a credit card, but too small to have a completion bond and a substantial budget."

Once acquired, the company sets up a brand new LLC, with no entanglements, "no history," for the film and then unleashes its team of "top producers, experienced entertainment attorneys, distributors, marketing and public relations experts, financial managers and accountants," which include Jonathan Sanger, (producer; *Vanilla Sky*, *The Elephant Man*, *The Producers*), Bob Presner, the retired president of Film Finances Canada, Ed Elbert, film marketing strategist and producer (*Anna and the King*), and Hollywood and Nashville fund managers Gudvi Sussman and Oppenheim. All with the goal of bringing the film over the finish line.

Which is where, exactly?

"Some films we will find a distributor for, some will go straight to video, but we are looking for films with theatrical legs," says Klein. ★

ASK THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

I'm a cinematographer, and I just found out that I'm pregnant. Should I tell people? I can't afford to lose any jobs right now.

Pregnant or not, people will make decisions about what you can or can't do. Camera work, because it is an especially physical job, often requires women—petite, pregnant, or otherwise—to prove their strength with that initial bone-crashing handshake.

It's interesting that while pregnant women fear they will get less work if they announce their pregnancy, dads-to-be tend to approach the situation with full conviction that they must and will work more. We tacitly agree and cooperate with those men, who now—we assume—have more responsibility. At the same time, we want moms-to-be to maintain some sort of calm bliss while they wait for the birth of their baby. But what if work is a necessary factor for that bliss?

Lynn Weissman, a freelance camera-person and the producer-director of the documentary-in-progress, *SUV, Mon Amour: An American Love Story*, got pregnant in her early 40s with identical twins. "What to do when you are a pregnant shooter is uncharted territory," she says. "Who are my role models? I generally did not tell new clients until it was obvious. Privacy aside, I worried that people might not hire



me if they considered pregnancy a limitation; it's hard enough to be female and a shooter. But looking back, maybe I could have been more candid. I did tell the crew in case something happened. I also hired an assistant when it became necessary.

My pregnancy gave me a hernia, and I couldn't carry heavy things in my later months."

When asked why she kept working, Lynn answered, "First, I needed to save money. Second of all, on principle. My bubby liked to say, 'Pregnancy isn't a disease!' And, paradoxically, work helped me take my mind off my bodily woes."

Of course, each specific situation warrants a different tactic. But in general, I would remind those who are reluctant to work with expecting women that they weren't born out of spontaneous combustion. Sometimes reframing a situation makes us all a bit more understanding.

Dear Doc Doctor:

Nannies are starting to cost me as much as a day of production. What's your stance on bringing kids to a shoot?

In my many years of going over budgets as a grant reader, I have yet to see a line item called "Nannies," so I have to assume that women pay for nannies on their own, recruit family members to help them, bring their kids to the shoot, or do all of the above.

People often ask me if they can bring their kids or grandma to a consultation, or if there is a place at the workshop facility where they can nurse, or if youngsters can play in the background while I give a lecture. I always say yes, and call the organizer to help facilitate whatever is necessary. If I were involved in a shoot, I would do exactly the same thing. And like me, many others agree that a kid around is better than a stressed-out director-mom.

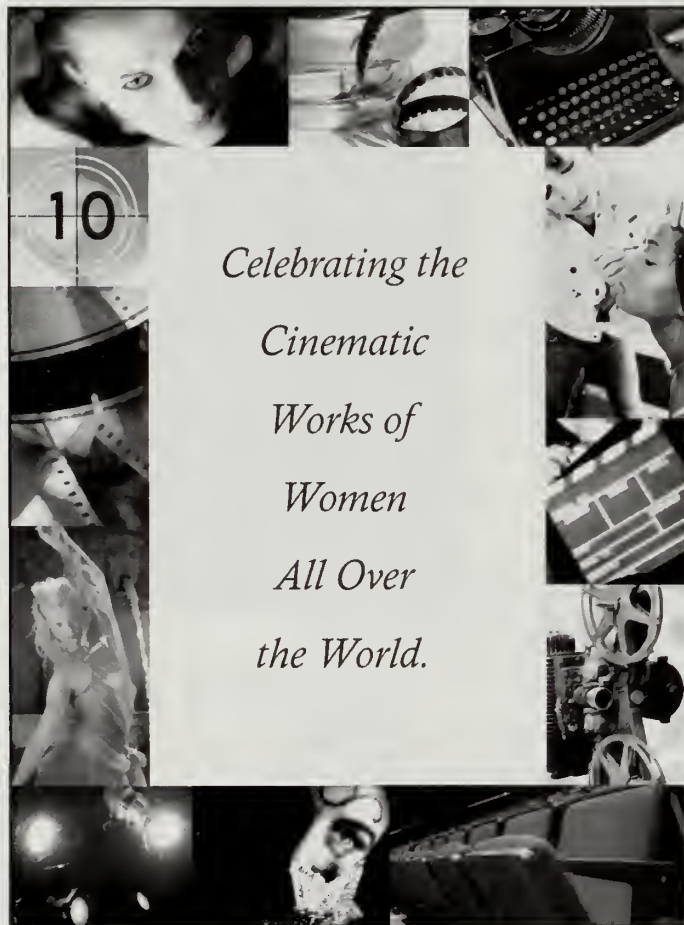
Many things need to be considered before dragging your offspring to a shoot—including the child's age and personality, as well as the type of shoot. Some kids might prefer to sit in a corner with a book, but those kids who become restless if they are not part of the main action need to be given a title and a task within the crew. (P.A. might be an unappealing position for an aspiring director but it can be an honorable gig for a preteen.) Producer Frances Lausell from Isla Films says, "My daughter Francesca worked as a P.A. when she was 11. She took her job very seriously, keeping quiet when it was necessary and helping around with whatever was necessary. It was very important for both of us to share what I do. My husband was also instrumental in supporting that process, bringing her to the set on weekends."

Adults can benefit from having kids around. First of all, people naturally avoid

strong language around kids, which brings down the overall level of stress. I also noticed a sort of shared responsibility among the crew. That paternal/maternal or master instinct kicks in when young apprentices are eager to learn and help.

Ask your crew for ideas on how to handle the shoot. After all, expensive nannies will eventually cost them fees or shooting days! And ask your kids, too. As you probably already know, kids can often offer original answers when asked to solve an interesting problem. ★

Fernanda Rossi is a filmmaker and story consultant, author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer.



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Her Brand of Filmmaking

Rachel Boynton negotiates Bolivia

Far from Bolivia, Rachel Boynton observes the New York City streets below.



By Rachel Boynton

Rachel Boynton produced, directed, co-edited, and recorded sound on her documentary feature *Our Brand Is Crisis*, a riveting political thriller that follows Jeremy Rosner, Stan Greenberg, Tad Devine, James Carville, and other US political consultants from the Greenberg Carville Shrum firm as they travel to South America to help Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada (aka Goni) become president of Bolivia. In 2005, the film won the prestigious International Documentary Association's Distinguished Documentary Feature Award and was nominated for a Truer Than Fiction Independent Spirit Award. It opens in theaters nationwide in the spring of 2006.

There's an image of me from the outtakes of *Our Brand Is Crisis*. I'm standing on a busy sidewalk in La Paz in front of a stuffed animal stand on my way to shoot at an outdoor market. I have a blue, body-sized bag slung over my shoulders (the tripod was in it), and I'm smiling. At the time, I was marching along with the DP, and he was saying, "It's for the foundation reel, so they see how hard you're working." And I started laughing and begged him to turn the camera off: "Plee-ze don't film me hauling the bags!"

That was a typical shoot moment: me lifting heavy equipment in La Paz, walking uphill, and I remember it well—mostly

because of the city's altitude. The capital of Bolivia is 10,000 feet above sea level and, when you're up that high, the lack of oxygen is no joke. Walking up a flight of stairs can leave you gasping. When you get off the plane, there's a small lounge area with an oxygen tank for foreigners who have trouble breathing. I remember being dumbfounded by casual joggers. Who could run up a mountain in such thin air? But if you stay a while you get used to it.

Jeremy Rosner, the chief strategist and pollster on Goni's campaign, would fly in from D.C., get off the plane at 6 am and work for 14 hours straight without missing a beat. I never understood how he did it.

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Towards the end of shooting, I found out he was bringing his own extra-strength Starbucks coffee beans with him (in La Paz you have to go out of your way to get anything other than Nescafé.) Personally, I drank a ton of coca tea. It was the only thing that would keep my head clear and ready for the long shoot days.

We'd start every morning with the daily meeting at campaign headquarters. That's where the campaign principals would talk about the message of the day, what they were doing to get it out to newspapers around the country, and how to communicate it to the people. All the techniques they used were identical to the ones used here—the only difference was that in Bolivia I was allowed to film; in the U.S. I'd never get such open access. The consultants would target specific segments of the population they knew they had a chance of convincing, and they were constantly trying to keep the campaign "on message"—focused on specific goals rather than on responding to criticism from other candidates or journalists. Every week there was a new theme, and every day there was a new message. And all of it was part of their larger plan.

But things didn't always go smoothly. At one point, Goni's principal rival, Manfred Reyes Villa, was doing so well that the campaign found it hard not to get distracted. Manfred had made an ad that was testing extremely well in the focus groups. It showed him feeding a small llama with a baby bottle, smiling, and talking about how he was going to revitalize Bolivia's economy by increasing the llama trade. "Llama's are good for their meat and their wool!" he said smiling, a cheery jingle buzzing in the background. Here was the solution to Bolivia's economic woes: We'll slaughter all the baby llamas after getting them nice and fat, and make a juicy profit. It seemed ridiculous to me, but the truth was, people liked it. To many Bolivians it seemed practical and feasible. For weeks after the ad aired, Goni's campaign manager was running around in a panic, relentlessly saying, "We need our own llama ad! What is Goni's

llama?" And everyone looked to the consultants to come up with the perfect solution to the campaign's woes.

Throughout all this, the American strategists kept track of the pulse of public opinion with nationwide polls and local focus groups. Jeremy would travel to tiny towns and remote villages, to test ads and listen to how people felt about the upcoming election. I loved the focus groups; they were fantastic scenes. You'd watch the American consultant hiding behind a two-way mirror or sitting behind a door, observing the adjacent room through a video link. (Jeremy once did a group in a rural church with nine drunk men, and he had to observe them from the closet.) You'd watch a translator whispering in the consultant's ear. And you'd hear the people share thoughts and feelings about their lives and their country and their candi-



US-supported Bolivian presidential hopeful, Goni, at attention.

dates. The focus groups always felt slightly sinister and strangely sacred; here were places where people, so often ignored by their leaders, could speak and be heard by others who had real influence. And because I was focusing on the role of the American strategists in the campaign, the groups provided an important window into the lives of the Bolivians.

But about halfway through the campaign, I realized the majority of my scenes were with white men who spoke English and, while it was intensely entertaining to listen to James Carville tell Goni how he could win, I knew I needed more of the Bolivian people. I had read in the paper that there was a massive march going on. Protesters were demanding constitutional reform to ensure better representation for the indigenous

majority, and they were marching into the capital from north, south, east, and west, walking for weeks from the countryside to reach La Paz. One day, towards the end of one of our trips, we didn't have anything scheduled to shoot so I thought maybe the DP and I could drive into the countryside and find the *marchistas*. So we hired a car and driver and set out. We drove for miles, pausing at truck stops to ask locals if they'd seen any sign of the protest. People always shook their heads and said, "Oh no, they don't really march. They get bussed in for the cameras!" We drove all day. The sun was 40 minutes from setting when we finally found a group of marchers, camping in a school in the rural village of Calacotto. We shot the perfect scene with the perfect light at the "magic hour."

I was so lucky in so many ways during the making of this film. Above all, I was lucky with my access. I was allowed to film something universal that's normally hidden (the way a candidate gets marketed to his people in a modern democracy) at a time of intense crisis and violence in the country. Many people have asked me how I got permission to film all the things I did. The consultants and the candidate said "yes" independently of each other, but it was Goni who was really the key. Once he gave me permission, almost everyone else followed suit. It was very brave of him to allow me to film such intimate moments in his campaign, and I think he did it because he was proud of his previous achievements as Bolivia's president from '93 to '97 (he privatized the economy, created Social Security and maternal/infant health care, and reformed education). He felt like he had nothing to hide. I think the consultants felt similarly—they sincerely believed in Goni and in his vision. Of course no one could have foreseen how events would unfold.

Some of the most surreal moments of the production came towards the end of shooting. In late 2003, I went to La Paz by myself to get some stock footage from a few local television stations. I went to the state-run Channel 7 chairman's office to get official permission to license the footage—and there was a hunger strike going on in the hallway. I think the employees hadn't been paid in a while, perhaps because the station had no money. To protest, they had lined the hall-



Indigenous women at a press conference for Goni



Boynton lugging her equipment through Bolivia

way with mattresses and were sleeping there and not eating. At the same time, the chairman had just been fired and no one knew who was going to be in charge. I sat in the hallway for hours waiting to find out whose signature I needed. People lying on mattresses all around me, chanted and waved signs. The rules of the game of democracy in Bolivia were very different from what I was used to.

In the cutting room Jennifer Robinson (the editor) and I spent countless hours wrestling with the larger themes—How much should a leader listen to the people? What does the media require of a modern politician? Is our "brand" of democracy

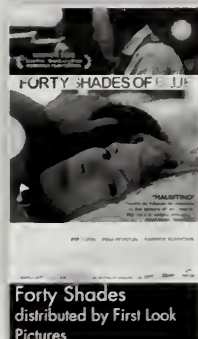
exportable? And what is our "brand" of democracy after all? I wanted all those issues to be implicit rather than explicit, to arise naturally as the story unfolded. Ultimately the edit took about a year and a half, partially because the situation in Bolivia kept evolving (and so the ending kept changing) and partially because it took a long time to figure out how to tell the story in a scene-based, "fiction feature-like" way. But I think the election year of 2006 is a good time for *Our Brand Is Crisis*—an adventure about the all-American art of branding and how it affects the state of democracy around the world—to come out. ☆

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Cool and collected: Mehta calmly handled the controversy surrounding her films.



When it comes to modern mores, Deepa Mehta refuses to stop asking why

By Sarah Coleman

Five years ago, when Deepa Mehta was about to start making her film *Water* in the holy city of Varanasi, India, 11 people stood outside the set and threatened to light themselves on fire. Weeks before, protesters had stormed the film's set on the banks of the river Ganges and destroyed it, causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. In one climactic moment, a man rowed himself out to the middle of the river, tied a rock around his waist, and jumped in, yelling that Mehta's film was responsible for his suicide. It didn't matter that the man, who survived, was exposed as a paid professional suicide attempter; by that time, frenzy had hijacked common sense, and the local government shut down the film's production.

Watching this delicate, lyrical film, which was made four years later in Sri Lanka, and will be released in the U.S. next month, it's hard to imagine what could have inspired such anger. The film follows a group of marginalized widows living in a run-down building on the banks of the Ganges. It's the 1930s, and the widows' struggle for freedom is set against the backdrop of Mahatma Gandhi's rise to power and the country's larger struggles for independence.

It sounds like a gentle, life-affirming period drama, but in India, where millions of widows are shunned by their families and forced into a life of begging or prostitution, the film hit a nerve. According to Hindu scripture, a widow has three choices: marry her husband's

younger brother, burn on her husband's funeral pyre, or live a life of isolation and self-denial. By daring to suggest that widows are worthy of basic human rights, Mehta temporarily made herself public enemy number one for Hindu extremists.

"These people were the self-appointed caretakers of Hinduism, and I was in their way," recalls the filmmaker, reached by phone at her second home in Delhi. "I was a soft target, and an easy one."

It wasn't the first time Mehta found herself at the center of a swirling controversy. Her 1996 film *Fire*, the story of two middle-class Indian sisters-in-law who become lovers, touched off violent protests in India. A movie theater showing the film was ransacked, and



Sarala was discovered in a small Sri Lankan village and cast as Chuyia in *Water*.

the film was withdrawn from distribution. When Mehta appeared to talk about the film at the International Film Festival of India, a man in the audience stood up and announced, "I am going to shoot you, madam!"

One expects, then, that the voice on the other end of the phone might be strident, defensive, perhaps a little bitter. But Mehta is never less than warm and down-to-earth; her laugh is an infectious deep, throaty chuckle. After the aborted Indian production, it took four years for her to film *Water*, she says, because she didn't want the film to come from a place of anger. "Literally, one day I woke up and said, 'Oh my god, I'm not angry any more,'" she says. "If *Water* had happened out of anger it would have been a different film—and frankly, not one I'd be interested in."

One of several talented female Indian directors working today (the group includes Mira Nair, Gurinder Chadha, and Aparna Sen), Mehta is undoubtedly the most taboo-breaking of the group. Yet despite their controversial themes, her films don't trade on sensationalism. *Fire*, she says, is less a movie about lesbianism than about how traditional, patriarchal Indian society fails women. "[Patriarchy] is a way of life that, like any other, should be questioned," she says. "I think questioning is natural—I've never really

deemed that I'm doing something controversial or cheeky."

Listening to Mehta talk about her films, it's hard to imagine she ever wanted to do anything else. Although she grew up steeped in Bollywood culture (her father was a movie distributor and theater owner), she wasn't immediately sold on filmmaking. "On the whole, I thought the [Bollywood] movies were a bit silly," she says. But one film, Asit Sen's 1966 *Mamta*, caught her attention. "It was the first film I'd seen that felt so much more real, emotionally, as opposed to over-the-top melodrama. It moved me greatly, and I realized that there was a kind of cinema that didn't have to be all cheap and shiny."

Still, she resisted—until a friend persuaded her to work for a while in the Cinema Workshop, a government-funded documentary house in Delhi. "It had nothing that was even remotely glamorous, so that felt safe for me," she says, adding, "I didn't realize I'd get hooked."

Typically enough, her first film, *Vimla*, focused on the hard realities of women's lives. A documentary, it was made for India's

Ministry of Family Planning and featured a 13-year-old girl who worked as a house cleaner. "I remember feeling passionately about her as we made the movie, and I was so upset to find out that she died two years later in childbirth," Mehta recalls.

While filming in Delhi, she met a Canadian producer named Paul Saltzman; the two married and Mehta moved in 1973 to Toronto, where a new raft of filmmaking possibilities awaited. Her first two feature films, *Sam and Me* (1991) and *Camilla* (1994)—pleasant, character-driven dramas—are set in Toronto. In between those two films, Mehta got a call from an unlikely source. "Was I interested in meeting George Lucas and possibly directing an episode of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*?" She laughs. "Yeah, right. George Lucas. I thought it was a joke."

She went on to direct two episodes of the series, one of which was set in Varanasi, which is where Mehta first came across the widows' houses: broken-down buildings filled with destitute women with shaved heads and thin white robes. "I'd seen a lot of widows while growing up, but I'd never seen the institutionalization of widows as an adult," she says. "That was my first exposure, and I said, 'My god, one day I'd really like to do a film about

When Mehta appeared to talk about the film at the International Film Festival of India, a man in the audience stood up and announced, "I am going to shoot you, madam!"

this whole phenomenon."

Water and *Fire* are two parts of an ambitious trilogy in which politics intersect with the personal aspects of women's lives. The third film, *Earth*, is set in 1947 in Lahore during the time when India was literally splitting in two. Based on a novel by Pakistani writer Bapsi Sidhwa, the film follows the fortunes of a beautiful Hindu nanny as the British pull out of India and a violent sectarian war erupts.

When she started working on *Earth*, Mehta says, the film seemed especially relevant because the genocide in Rwanda was



Deepa Mehta on the set of *Water*.

only a year or two old. "Bapsi said something intriguing to me, which was that all wars are fought on women's bodies," she says. "I think that's especially true of sectarian war, which is so devastating."

Though each part of the trilogy takes place in a different era, the three films clearly have common themes. Each is about the struggle of a woman—or women—to escape male oppression, but that doesn't mean that all the women in them are angelic. Along with their complex heroines, many of Mehta's films feature powerful matriarchs bent on thwarting the heroine's wishes. "The only people these matriarchs can exercise power over is other women, so they abuse them," says Mehta. "I find that fascinating."

In between *Earth* and *Water*, when she was recovering from the aborted production in Varanasi, Mehta took some time out to make a completely different kind of film. *Bollywood/Hollywood*, which came out in 2002, is a romantic comedy full of snappy dialogue, quirky characters, and joyous song-and-dance numbers. After what had happened in Varanasi, Mehta says, "I felt like doing something irreverent. I think I wrote *Bollywood/Hollywood* in about a month. It was very liberating."

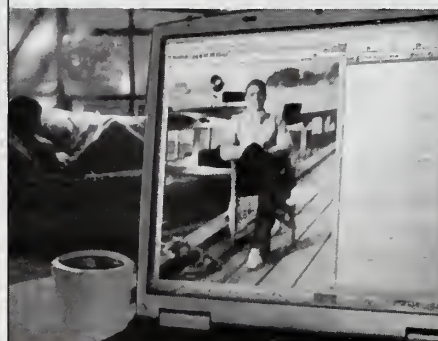
Even at her most frivolous, though, Mehta has a knack for creating intriguing, believable characters. From Rocky, the house servant in *Bollywood/Hollywood* who has a secret double life as a transvestite nightclub singer, to

Shakuntala, the middle-aged widow in *Water* whose Hindu faith conflicts with her earthly desires, Mehta's characters have rich, fascinating inner lives. Thanks to her ability to write such full characters, Mehta has been able to attract leading Indian actresses like Seema Biswas and Shabana Azmi to the roles.

These days, Mehta divides her time between Toronto and Delhi, spending approximately half the year in each city. Not being fully immersed in either culture "has given me an ability not to look at them through rose-colored glasses," she says. That clear perspective on both countries will come in handy when she films her next project, *Kamagata Maru*, a story of how Canada, fearing a "brown invasion," refused to accept a ship full of Indian immigrants in 1914.

With any luck, the project will be free from controversy—but don't bank on it. Mehta tends to pick subjects that get under people's skins, and *Kamagata Maru* is bound to raise some thorny questions about race and immigration. If it's anything like Mehta's other films, it will be a powerful piece of filmmaking that, because it encourages out-of-the-box thinking, also ruffles some feathers. "It all starts from curiosity," Mehta says. "Why can't two women make a choice to be together or a widow get married? Why do we have racism and exclusion? That's what it's about—why, why, why?" ★

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From left: Lynn Whitfield, Susan Morse, Terry Lawler, Debra Lee, Tina Fey, Carey Graeber, and Julianne Moore

On the Scene

Send in the Muses

The New York Women in Film & Television's 25th annual awards

By S.T. VanAirdale

The champagne flowed on one side, the red carpet on the other. In between were the women, hundreds of them: filmmakers, producers, actors, technicians, writers, executives and everybody who was in-the-know enough to celebrate New York Women in Film & Television's 25th annual Muse Awards.

1,200 guests visited the New York Hilton's Grand Ballroom to praise honorees Debra Lee, president of Black Entertainment Television, Julianne Moore, Tina Fey, and Susan E. Morse, film editor. The event's evolution from the initial 80-person gathering that honored Pauline Kael (and, in subsequent years, Robert Benton and Dustin Hoffman) to the gala luncheon with something like 80 women on the dais alone implies a healthy spirit of inclusion. But in 2005, the flash-fueled fever that swept the room pretty much transcended faces and names, suggesting that the Muse Awards are now more about tradition—a festive hybrid of recognition, call to action, and celebrity worship.

As the afternoon began, gossip journalists alternated questions like, "What does this award mean to you?" with "Who is the hardest person you have to shop for during the holidays?" NYWIFT executive director Terry Lawler followed *Guiding Light* stars Nicole Forester, Tom Pelphrey, and others into the camera glare. Fey praised *Saturday Night Live* as a diverse workplace while speaking adoringly of her infant daughter, Alice, and teasing reporters about her upcoming project with *Da Ali G Show*'s Sacha Baron Cohen. And finally came Moore, who paid her own dues as a soap star before her 1995 independent-film breakthrough, *Safe*.

"That's always a tough question," Moore replied when asked how opportunities for women have changed in the last decade. "At the time I was starting my film career, it was sort of the very beginning of independent film. It was a time sort of ripe for possibilities for everybody—not just women, but for men as well. In that time period, independent film sort of

developed, but was also sort of co-opted by the studios. Now you have these sort of mini-majors, I guess. And in a sense, I think we're due for another period of revolution, where now we're looking at completely outside investors who are coming in and changing it."

So does Moore think we will see more women producing and working behind the scenes as a result of that revolution? Another tough question, evidently. "Listen, here's the thing, you know?" she said. "I really think that your sex has very little to do with what you do in the working world. I think the more we talk about the differences between men and women, the more divisive we are. The more we create a division. In a sense, it's about opportunities for everybody."

Fair enough, but this *was* the Muse Awards, about which NYWIFT president Carey Graeber wrote in the event program, "We ... gather today to celebrate women's progress in the entertainment industry and the role NYWIFT has played in supporting that

growth.” And other attendees, like actress Lynn Whitfield (*Head of State*, 2003), asserted that there remains plenty of room to improve. “This is a male-driven, male-run business with so much of the demographic being about what men want to see,” said Whitfield, who stepped into the master of ceremonies role when professional awards-show sniper Kathy Griffin called in sick the day before. “So to have the sensibility of a woman behind the camera, to have a woman directing you—that’s a different approach. You have to have the yin and yang.” Later, in her opening remarks to the lunching crowd, Whitfield noted that women represented only five percent of feature film directors in 2004.

After a highlight reel comprised mostly of clips from *Saturday Night Live*, Fey shot down the myth of *SNL* as a perpetually hostile boy’s club. As the show’s head writer since 1999 (and the first woman to hold that post), Fey attributed her success in part to *SNL* alumnae who she said blazed a trail for her through the ‘70s and ‘80s. “I appreciate how lucky I am in that way,” Fey said. “I reap the benefits of whatever baloney Laraine Newman and Jane Curtin and Nora Dunn and Jan Hooks fought their way through, and I thank them,” she said and paused a moment. “I should say that since I had my baby, I’m trying not to curse so much. So when I say baloney... you know.

“Women have always been the stars on our show,” Fey added. “It’s not until they leave and try to make movies that they seem to fall through the cracks. And *that’s* what I think is baloney. That’s *fucking* baloney.”



From top: Susan Morse, Julianne Moore, and Debra Lee, all with their 2005 Muse Awards.

BET’s Debra Lee, winkingly resentful of having to follow Fey to the podium, said after her own biographical highlight reel, “That’s just not fair. Although I must admit, I beat her out on the hairstyles. That afro is my all time favorite.”

Fey’s genius (and hairstyles) notwithstanding, many of the event’s attendees might have acknowledged Lee as the most accomplished, influential woman in the room. After almost two decades with the company—she headed up BET operations that ranged from publishing to negotiating the network’s \$3 billion sale to Viacom—Lee succeeded BET founder Robert Johnson in 2005 as the company’s president and CEO. She entered 2006 as Viacom’s highest-ranking African-American woman executive.

But Lee’s Muse Award symbolized more than just her corporate advance. She recalled her early years at BET, a famously equitable workplace where, nevertheless, her water broke in Johnson’s Jaguar as he sped the expectant mother from work to the delivery room. Lee eventually exercised her power as BET’s general counsel to amend the company’s maternity leave policy.

Lee also had a bit of general praise for NYWIFT and her network, where, she said, 11 of the 17 top executives are women. “Being chosen as a recipient of such an honor,” Lee said, “by an organization that is as preeminent an entertainment industry organization in New York is especially pleasing because of the important role women have played inside my own company. To say that women are keys to BET’s success is more of an understatement than any of you—other than, of course, my BET colleagues—in this room can even realize.”

Muse Award recipient Susan E. “Sandy” Morse may have had a boss that was even more sympathetic to working mothers than Lee’s

was: Woody Allen, for whom Morse served as regular editor from 1979 to 1998, encouraged Morse to bring her young son to work on several of his projects in the late ‘80s. Morse later redirected that generosity at her own assistants, even the males who reacted with shock when she insisted they take paternity leave. “No, no, no,” Morse claimed she told them. “This isn’t for you. This is for you in one sense, because it’s still very lovely for you to see what it’s like to watch your baby born and to see what it’s like as he or she develops over those first couple weeks. But no—this is for your *wife*.”

Morse concluded her speech expressing her “modest dream” of a day when the pairing of such personal considerations and professional achievements would not be that remarkable. She was barely back in her seat before Whitfield asked, “So what does a black person need to do to get a role in a Woody Allen film?” A nice attempt at channeling that Kathy Griffin-esque snark the audience was counting on, even if a true saint like Morse might have deserved a little better.

But all was forgotten when Julianne Moore approached the podium. She expounded on her recent trip to Norway, where she joined Salma Hayek to co-host the Nobel Peace Prize concert (“It was ripe for an *SNL* parody,” she said, glancing sort-of hopefully toward Fey). Moore then cited some of her own muses, from her front-row friend and colleague Ellen Barkin to her mother, who she said never indulged an alternative to balancing family and career. She simply expected her daughter to do both—and Moore has. “The question that makes me angriest,” Moore explained, “other than, ‘Why did you take your clothes off in that movie?’ is, you know, ‘Isn’t that hard? How do you do it?’ Or when I say to somebody, ‘Oh, I’m starting this job in January, and we’re trying to figure it out.’ And they say, ‘Oh, that’s terrible.’

“And I think, no, it’s not,” she continued. “It’s not terrible. It’s fantastic. I have this fantastic job, and I have this fantastic flexibility in my life. I have wonderful children, and I have a wonderful husband. And I have it because of my mother and all of our mothers and all of the people who paved the way.” ★



By Katherine Dykstra

Rosario Dawson was sleeping when I arrived on the set of *Descent* at Brooklyn's Galapagos bar/gallery on a slushy morning in December. I had come to interview Dawson and her Trybe production company partner and longtime friend, Talia Lugacy. But Lugacy was busy directing the film's "club scene," and thus also unavailable, so I waited in the cavernous extras quarters next door.

More than an hour had passed, and I was beginning to get antsy, when suddenly the space was crawling with 20-somethings in nightclub attire; the scene had wrapped and Lugacy, all long hair and low-key, stood out amongst her actors. She and I were led into the same makeshift dressing room where Dawson was supposed to be sleeping—"I think she's gone for lunch now," said the publicist.

At first, Lugacy, 25, answered my questions with a low voice and bent head, but she loosened up as she began to talk about *Descent*, a rape revenge story with a savage twist near the end, which she co-wrote with Brian Priest and which stars Dawson, 26, (*Sin City*, *Rent*, *The 25th Hour*). This is exactly the kind of collaborative project (Lugacy writing and directing, Dawson acting and producing) that the two women have been wanting to do since they met nearly ten years ago at The Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York. They were a mere 15 and 16 respectively.

After my interview, and during her photo shoot, Lugacy's shyness returned; she fidgeted with her hands and wasn't sure whether to look into the lens or to ignore it. Just as I was

wondering whether Dawson would show at all, she blew in—"Rosario's on the floor!" someone shouted. Dawson grabbed Lugacy by the hand, pulled her into her lap, and began mugging for the camera. Her effect on Lugacy was marked—Lugacy's anxiety dissolved and her smile came naturally. Dawson, as outgoing and excited as Lugacy is quite and contemplative, seemed to have the same calming affect on everyone, making it impossible to stay annoyed with her, even when she keeps you waiting for hours.

Katherine Dykstra: Tell me about your relationship with Talia. I know you've known each other for years.

Rosario Dawson & Talia Lugacy

Getting Trybe off the ground

Rosario Dawson: Well, my first film was *Kids*, and after I did the movie, we ended up moving to Texas for a year and then I got a call to come back. I was 16. I got an agent, and it was like, 'Ok, I'm going to pursue acting.' Even though it wasn't anything I was doing before. And my grandmother was like, 'If you're going to take it seriously, you have to go to acting class.' So she signed me up to go to Strasberg, and I walk in and there's all these young people there, all trying to, you know, they have their reels and stuff like that. I didn't understand any acting or movie-speak because I hadn't been an actor before. I walk in and there's Talia with that hair and like this big Kubrick t-shirt. She was extremely focused and very driven as she's



Dawson, here in *Little Black Dress*, a short directed by Lugacy, has only worked with a handful of female directors, but hopes to see that change.

always been. And we were great friends after that for a very long time, and we always talked about the fact that she was going to write and direct and that I was going to act and produce. That's just something that's always been our goal.

KD: Are you two in sync?

RD: I think I've been able to be more hands on and get experience in a way that she hasn't been able to have. I constantly work all the time, but it actually goes by in a blur, and she's a very patient person and can't imagine making a film without it taking a year at least.

KD: What have you worked on together?

RD: We just did a short film this summer for *Glamour* magazine, for Film Aid, which they screen in refugee camps in Africa. They approached me to direct it. I said I want her [Talía] to direct it to kind of establish us as Trybe. I want to really put our company out there. It's been really hard for the past couple years; we were pushing a different script called *Incense and Peppermints*. When we were doing the meetings on it with different producers they were like, 'It's a great script, but it's a period piece. It's going to cost a lot of money. And Rosario, maybe if you were in it, we could kind of raise the money that way.' [*Descend*] took us a couple years of doing different meetings with different people, people who loved it but were like 'the material itself is just really heavy for people.' It's just kind of interesting because I was like, 'You made a film that stars me and

could be shot for cheap, but the material, the content, is so scary for people that we're having even more trouble trying to get financing for this then we did *Incense and Peppermints*.

KD: What's it like working with Talía?

RD: It's amazing seeing a director be able to handle the crew, being able to handle the actors, the story, maintaining all the different things and still hitting walls because we're making an independent movie, and a lot of the time you have to make changes specifically just for the budget, and they effect creative things, and you have to juggle that, and you have to juggle it quickly to keep going.

KD: You've worked on quite a bit of Hollywood stuff as well.

RD: What's great about doing big-budget stuff is when you use it well, and you're still a director and a storyteller, and you're able to put those stories out, and then have the budget to support how you want to express it. But a lot of times it doesn't happen, so you end up having to go to the independent films that don't necessarily look like they want it to look but it's a great story. I have worked on so many different films and gone, 'I want to do something. I want to be accountable for something. I want to know that there's a movie in the theater that I'm one hundred percent accountable for.' I don't want to walk away going, 'Hey man, I didn't like that movie either.' This is our first film; we're definitely hitting a lot of walls.

KD: Talk about that, what walls?

RD: At the end of the day, it was great, we got all our money by independent financing, we were able to have final cut, we get to maintain the negative, which is really brilliant, especially for our first film. But it also doesn't necessarily guarantee us distribution. We changed DPs in the middle of shooting, we've had huge location issues, and we're not getting anything for free which really hurts. It's the winter, and this movie is supposed to take place in September.

KD: Do you think about your femaleness as you work?

RD: I do think about it because most of the time, if you look at a lot of films I've done over the last 10 years, I'm not usually with other females, which is really interesting. I've only worked with a handful of female directors.

KD: And do you see that changing?

RD: It's interesting. Where we don't have a lot of female directors to look up to—it is something that's breaking. I think women storytellers have a way of telling stories and understanding things that I think need to be appreciated. And you see a lot of female directors taking on male stories and doing beautiful things with them, because that's kind of what they're left doing. There are so many changes happening with people downloading things and money not being made the way they expect it to be. I think it's an opportunity for people to jump in and make changes and be



For *Lugacy*, Trybe Films is about creating films she can't live without making.

proactive. Like when independent film really started coming up, people were like, 'Holy shit, we don't have to [work] with the studios? We can do this ourselves? We can call the shots? Right on.' I think it really comes in waves, and that's what I'm hoping happens with women storytellers and women directors. I think that's really the next wave that really hasn't been explored as well as it could be.

Katherine Dykstra: Where did *Descent* come from?

TL: Talia Lugacy: The writing happened fast. The concept took a little while to come up with. Brian and I wrote a script previous to this and everyone was saying, 'Oh, it's too sweet. It's too this. It's too that.' So we put our heads together and decided that if we were going to make a film, we really wanted to shake things up.

KD: And how did you get it made?

TL: Everyone who read it was like, 'Oh, my God, the graphic violence of it, the sensitive racial aspects to it.' There were so many different things in there that people were offended by on so many different levels. Every step of the way we were told, 'Just change the ending. Modify this. Lighten this up.' But we finally found a fellow by the name of Morris Levy [of Mega Films] who read the script. At first he was a bit aghast, but he read it again and got behind it.

KD: So it's worth it to stick to your guns?

TL: Oh yeah, absolutely. One of the themes of the film is that there are things that happen that cannot be articulated. This manipulation of words continues throughout the film in that her sense of herself is based on what other people say about her. So the 'descent' starts even before the rape happens because she has self doubt. No, she doesn't go to a counselor, but that's real. I've never really seen that.

KD: Tell me about Trybe.

TL: This is something Rosa and I have been dreaming about forever. Brian and I had this other script that didn't include her as an actress, so it was hard to get that off the ground. We were totally committed to it until we realized, well, that's not going to be financially feasible. So we tackled this one. So this will be our debut—the birth of Trybe so to speak. And in the future we'll stay together and continue making films we think we can't live without making.

KD: This film has a strong female lead. Is that important to you?

TL: That was not intentional, not purposeful at all. I'm not on some sort of tirade for women's rights. This is a humanistic thing and the films that we want to make are the ones that pay attention to people: how they really are, and how they really behave and interact, and what they go through, and what it means to be a person.

KD: And is that how you see Trybe being different from another company?

TL: Absolutely. We've come to a point where people are very familiar with the language, so you can fuck with them a little more by using their expectations to thwart them. That's the kind of thing that we want to keep doing.

KD: And what about the difference between an independent film and a Hollywood film?

TL: I'm starting to not see a difference anymore.

KD: So if you were to define independent film...

TL: Independent film is really, from start to finish, pooling your own resources and getting all the way to the end without having a major

player tell you how to do things. But then that line's quite blurry because there are different stages when you need help and you need things and you can only get to a certain point on your own. The way that I could do it, is to define it in terms of its spirit, its energy, its purpose, like no one who got on board for this were like, 'I'm going to do this because I'm going to rake in the dough.' None of us were thinking that, so maybe that's what separates it.

KD: How did you get interested in film?

TL: I just was watching movies all the time when I was a kid. It was really the only thing I ever wanted to do. I actually tried to get into NYU when I was like 14, I went there, and I was like, 'Please just let me take a class or something.' And they were like, 'Come back.' So I ended up taking acting classes at Strasberg in New York.

KD: What kind of advice do you have for someone who's just starting out?

TL: Advice? I'm far too young to be giving any advice.

KD: Well, what have you learned?

TL: If you're imitating, you're going to find yourself quite stunned.

KD: What's your most important resource on set?

TL: My brain. Every single day we're shooting is quite different, because, like I said, the story keeps changing so every location we go to is like it's own little world, so we get into a different mindset, 'Where is she at this stage of her evolution,' kind of, so every couple of days has its own energy.

KD: Did you scout locations for *Descent*?

TL: Absolutely. I did as much as I could before we even got the money. You have like a nickel to make an entire thing come into being, and it's really hard but you do it. I find producing to be a lot of fun. To my mind you can't really separate directing from producing: What are my resources exactly? What can I do when? How can I set up my schedule? It's inseparable. If I don't have a strong handle on how the production is running, I can't really assert as much as I need to creatively in a directing capacity, not at this level anyway. ★

...Huffman (right) plays a transsexual, Bree, who is reunited with her son Toby (Kevin Zegers) in Duncan Tucker's *Transamerica*.



Guys on Girls on Film

In a year full of masculine movies, five men wrote women very well

BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

From time to time there is a banner year for female characters. A great fuss is made about how movie-land has changed, allowing women into a club that hadn't previously given them more than a handful of meaty roles at a time.

2005 was not one of those years.

Most of the movies that earned the best reviews and the most little statues last year were stories that explored the craggy, unstable territory of modern manhood: *Brokeback Mountain*, *Capote*, *A History of Violence*, *Grizzly Man*, *Hustle & Flow*. These are all serious and wonderful films and proof that the film industry—at least the independent one—is healthy and vital and brimming with talent. But where does that leave the ladies?

The Independent decided to shine a light on five movies whose male filmmakers bucked that trend. Their films revolved around women, and they elicited memorable performances from their female leads. Of course, there were incredible female filmmakers—Miranda July for example—who released films with compelling and realistic portraits of women, but we wanted to look at what happened when filmmakers directed—and in some cases wrote—across gender, attempting nuanced and believable portraits of the opposite sex. The result is five very different movies about a broad range of women.

Nine Lives

Rodrigo Garcia almost single handedly made up for the dearth of juicy female roles with *Nine Lives*, a series of anecdotes that act as windows into the lives of several very different women. Garcia has long kept a notebook of ideas, and when he began to write this script, he plucked nearly a dozen vignettes from it, which he then developed and strung together. Garcia chose to put women at the center of each segment simply because he likes his female characters the best: "The men that I write all feel like versions of myself. The women feel more differentiated," he says. "The men are often a little too good or a little too bad. I never feel they're as complex."

Each of *Nine Lives'* segments is filmed in real time without cuts. Garcia worked with each of his actresses (Elpidia Carrillo, Robin Wright Penn, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Glenn Close, Holly Hunter, Amy Brenneman, Amanda Seyfried, Sissy Spacek, and Kathy Baker) for two days, rehearsing exhaustively on the first and filming on the second. They'd do as many takes as they could until they were too tired to continue or the light ran out. Then Garcia would choose the best version. The whole thing cost about \$500,000. Because Garcia doesn't rely on edits, the blocking is often dazzling complex. The camera stays close as the actors navigate tight spaces, which results in a real intimacy with the characters: a fraught nurse confronts her tormentor; a wistful and lonely mother contemplates infidelity; a loyal, winsome daughter ferries messages between her parents, looking for a way into adult life.



In *Nine Lives*, Robin Wright Penn's Diana traumatically runs into an ex in the produce section of a grocery store.

In the 10 to 14 minutes allotted to them, Garcia's nine women show a remarkable range of emotion. No portrait is static and although many take place somewhere ordinary—a grocery store, a bedroom, a motel—each chapter illustrates the moment when a fundamental shift occurs in the character's life. "I don't write films about people in the Himalayas or people robbing banks in Shanghai," Garcia says. "Writing about women is my way of going somewhere."

In the opening story, Carrillo's Sandra plays a prison inmate on her best behavior, eager to redeem herself and find a way back to her daughter. But the reckless rage that apparently landed her in jail seethes beneath her surface and finally erupts. It is a powerful beginning and a harbinger of what seems to be Garcia's larger point: While we may try to be our best selves, to contain the past, our darker angels always live within us, affecting everything we do and everyone we love.

What's remarkable about Garcia's film is that it resists easy synthesis: The parts do not form a single narrative arc or resolve neatly, and while familiar faces reappear throughout the film, this is not a movie about how connected we all are. Rather, it's a film about how a life can pivot in a flash. "I've always been interested in small stuff," Garcia says, "in a miniature or a moment that says something about the rest of the life." There are no happy endings, only moments of quiet revelation.

Junebug

Without its three female characters, Phil Morrison's film about a fractious Southern family would be an exercise in verbal economy: Few words are shared by the three very different—but equally reserved—men.

Instead, *Junebug* is filled up by its complex women. Embeth Davidtz' sophisticated Madeleine speaks in a dulcet British accent that makes her eager generosity imperceptible to her guarded new in-laws. Madeleine's perfect manners and too-polished surface mask her genuine need to know and be known by her new relatives. Celia Weston's tart matriarch, Peg, isn't easily won over by Madeleine. She loves her children fiercely

and wants only to protect them from outside forces that might make their lives seem small or shabby. Amy Adams' effusively optimistic Ashley is one of the finest performances of the year. She prattles on, at first appearing to be a slightly dim naive and ultimately revealing herself to be the heart of the film and of the Johnston clan, because as Morrison points out, her relentless positivity draws out the best in everyone.

Morrison resists dividing his characters along gender lines (quiet men and the women who love them) and instead groups them according to something more elusive. On the one side there are Peg and her two sons, Madeleine and Ashley's husbands. This trio seems hopelessly trapped inside themselves and unable to believe the best about anyone else. In the other camp are Ashley and Eugene, Peg's husband: patient, loving, and unflagging in their belief that all will turn out for the best. Madeleine, says Morrison, must find her way into this last category or a crucial balance is lost. "All the spouses temper each other," he says.

Morrison, who directed the film from a script written by his childhood friend Angus MacLachlan, grew up in Winston Salem, North Carolina, where the film is set. Though *Junebug* is about his hometown, Morrison says he was wary of falling into the trap of "write what you know." He didn't want to get too cozy in common stereotypes.

"Write what you don't know about what you think you know," Morrison says with a laugh. "If you're a guy, doing a project where the weight is with the women characters is one way of doing that."

Funny Ha Ha

In the first scene of Andrew Bujalski's debut film, Marnie, a recent college graduate living in Boston, wanders, tipsy, into a tattoo parlor and suggests a couple of goofy ideas for the artist to ink into her flesh.

"You really haven't thought about what you want," says the proprietor.

"Oh I've thought about it," Marnie replies.

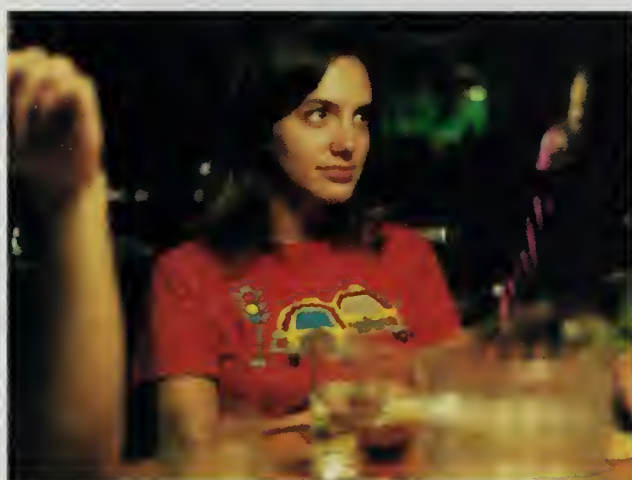
And she has. She just hasn't made a decision.

Just like *Marnie*, Bujalski's film thinks hard without drawing any pat conclusions. *Funny Ha Ha* tracks a few weeks in Marnie's life as she looks for a job, searches aimlessly for a relationship, tries on a couple different hobbies. Like many recent grads, Marnie is waiting for the certainty of adulthood to catch up with her.

Bujalski wrote the screenplay for *Funny Ha Ha* in 1999, and although it won a Someone to Watch Award at the Independent Spirits in 2004, *Funny Ha Ha* only found distribution last year.

Bujalski based his heroine on his good friend, Kate Dollenmayer, whom he then cast as his lead. "I somehow got the notion in my head that she'd be a good person to try to build a film around," he says. "I took a wild guess that her charisma would translate to the screen and could support a feature film."

Shot on location on 16mm film on a budget of less than \$100,000, Bujalski's movie has the naturalistic style of John Cassavetes and Mike Leigh, though there is little melodrama in *Funny Ha Ha*. The action is



Kate Dollenmayer plays Marnie, a recent college grad in the midst of the shock of real life, in *Funny Ha Ha*.

resolutely small and the characters uniformly subdued. It is a portrait of that time after college when everything is open and unresolved—which scares the crap out of Marnie. She huddles for safety in apartments that look like dorm rooms, wears beat-up sneakers and torn jeans, and drinks lots of cheap beer.

Dollenmayer, perhaps because she is sort of playing herself, exudes a tentative sweetness that perfectly matches Bujalski's cinematic style. She is sad-eyed and self-effacing, melancholic from loneliness, but still unmistakably hopeful. Bujalski has a genuine ear for how people talk to each other—how difficult it is to ask for what we really want and say what we really mean. In one scene Marnie has the perfect opportunity to confess her feelings to her crush, Alex. Instead, she agrees with him, several times, that now is not really a good time to talk.

Centering his film on a female character, says Bujalski, 29, was a way to get a bit of distance on all too familiar territory. "I put a lot of myself in [Marnie]," he says, "and having that necessary half-step of distance inherent to the gender switch made it much easier for me to write the character."

Transamerica

Everyone's first question for Duncan Tucker is: Why did you cast a

woman to play Bree? *Transamerica*'s central character, played by Felicity Huffman, is a transsexual male in the final steps of gender reassignment. Though she dresses as a woman, has undergone facial reconstructive surgery, and has been taking hormones for years, for the majority of the film Bree still has the physical trappings of maleness. "It's simple," answers Tucker, "I think of Bree as a woman."

Tucker's movie covers a lot of well-known ground: the open road that leads to self-discovery, hilarious moments of mistaken identity, a mystically wise and accepting Indian. But his protagonist defies what Tucker calls the American penchant for cut and dried duality: black or white, blue or red, gay or straight, man or woman. Bree is essentially still both when the film begins. Though she knows herself to be female, she must face her fears and uncertainties—as well as her upcoming surgery—in order to truly become a woman.

At the beginning of the film, Bree is deeply prim and proper. Despite her radical decision, she is an inherently traditional person. She covers up her body in long skirts and high collars and uses her intelligence as a buffer to keep new acquaintances at arm's length. She recognizes—quite rightly—that if she lets them in and they discover her secret, she risks profound destabilization.

Over the course of the film, Tucker and Huffman let Bree loosen up. She is at first disconcerted, but ultimately renewed. She wears clothes that make her look like a woman comfortable in her own skin, and in a final revealing shot, we see Bree naked, as the woman she has become. Tucker shot the film with a handheld camera, a technique usually used to unsettle an audience. In this case, it brings us in a bit closer. "Bree is an old character," says Tucker, "just with a twist."

Heights

Chris Terrio's first feature, *Heights*, is a daisy-chain ensemble drama—a genre which seemed to be in vogue last year. The film concerns the lives of Diana (Glenn Close), a charismatic and successful actress whose face adorns the sides of bus shelters, her daughter Isabel (Elizabeth Banks), a struggling photographer unsure about whether to marry Jonathan (James Marsden), a character whose conflicted sexuality ensnares him in a love triangle with Alec (Jesse Bradford), a talented young actor who auditions for Diana. And so on.

Though the movie gives almost equal time to each of the characters, it is Close's Diana who holds the center of the story. She is an unrepentant narcissist whose incredible talent allows her to get away with bad behavior, though she is trying to be a better mother to a daughter who sorely needs her advice and support. She ultimately succeeds in that most difficult of roles by holding herself back from explicitly telling Isabel what to do. Instead, Isabel discovers what she needs to know on her own and then turns to her mother for comfort. It is a rare nuanced portrayal of an adult mother-daughter relationship, one that changes for the better only after both parent and child have grown up.

Terrio says he was drawn equally to all his characters, gay and straight, male and female. "What's exciting to me is writing about someone who wants something badly and is having trouble getting it." In Diana, he found just such a character. Although she is a fierce and accomplished person who out-earns her wayward, much younger husband, she wants desperately to balance her family against her career. "I think a lot of women have to manage that dynamic," says Terrio. And what more fitting tribute to women than a realistically complicated struggle? ★

Hot

Meet the female pioneers of
the next big web thing

BY DANIELLE DIGIACOMO

I recognize Ryanne Hodson as soon as I enter the Lower East Side café—even though I've never met her before. After watching her video blogs, I feel as though I already know the pretty, engaging, 26-year-old artist, who is now at the forefront of a small but rapidly growing movement of video bloggers. "Vlogging" essentially consists of making short videos and, after compressing them to specific settings (to ensure, as vlogger Jan McLaughlin says, that they are "reliably seen without stuttering, buffering streams getting in the way"), posting them online. Websites like www.ourmedia.org, www.blogger.com, and <http://blip.tv> offer free media hosting, and regular vloggers can sign up for an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed, which allows them to download vlogs to one easily accessible place as well as highlight their work on sites like www.mefedia.com, a directory of free vlogs. All this ensures an immediacy of distribution, exhibition, and gratification previously unknown to the often frustratingly snail-paced, red-taped world of film and video production.

For Hodson, who dealt with the typical frustrations of getting her video work seen after she graduated from a Boston art college in 2002, vlogging's lack of barriers is, "what I've always been looking for." When

Vlog!

fellow Beantown-er Steve Garfield, who the *Boston Phoenix* called "the father of vlogging," introduced her to the form, it was love at first post. Hodson's vlog, in which she usually "stars," consists of highly personal, slice-of-life works that vary formally. Some are long takes, while others are intricately edited montage.

When I ask how many hours a day she spends online, she looks a bit sheepish, admitting, "at least nine hours, but I guess it's my job." It is. Not only does she publish a regularly updated "per-vlog"—one of the most popular in the country—she also created and maintains the instructional FreeVlog site (www.freevlog.org), teaches free workshops, hosts monthly presentations at Soho's Apple Store, and is working on



Asking all the tough questions: Internet vlogger Zadi Diaz, or Karmagrrrl to you, conducts an interview.

a full-length how-to book on vlogging, essentially a more detailed print-version of her Freevlog site.

Across the country at Los Angeles' Apple Store, Zadi Diaz (vlogger identity: Karmagrrrl) leads similar vlogging presentations. The 31-year-old has worked as a magazine photo editor, marketing director, community activist, and playwright. While working at the Indy Media Center, she learned to shoot video and alter it for internet uploading. Born in Harlem and raised in three of New York's boroughs, Diaz is a true bagel babe transplanted into a wheatgrass world. When she relocated to L.A. with her fiancée, she discovered that vlogging was a creative way to keep in touch with loved ones.

Her vlog (<http://smashface.com/vlog/>) has since evolved into a more topical one, fusing personal intimacy with political commentary, often altering focus with each post. "In one post I can be political, in another personal and diaristic, in another more creative and experimental. Or I can combine them all and make something new," she says. "It's a way to document myself—not necessarily what I'm doing—but my thought process. And it lets me invite others into that." One entry called "All Hallow's Eve" is a beautifully haunting experimental video in which ghostly figures pulsate to a distorted version of Simon and Garfunkel's "Scarborough Fair." "Wake Me Up When September Ends," the eponymous Green Day song, plays over a visual commentary on Hurricane Katrina, using evocative footage to create empathy for its victims and newscast footage to criticize the government's response.

Like Hodson, vlogging is more than a passing fancy for Diaz who, along with teaching Apple workshops, serves as the L.A. correspondent for Rocketboom, the irreverent daily "news-style" vlogcast that is likely to be the first of its kind to penetrate mainstream pop culture (it's already been made available for subscription by TiVo). Inspired by her vlogging experience, Diaz began a supplementary career in documen-

tary filmmaking (the reverse trajectory of most other vloggers).

Recently highlighted in the *New York Times* piece on vlogging, Charlene Rule is an innovative, much-lauded presence on the scene who just showcased her work at the East Village's Pioneer Theatre. At <http://scratchvideo.tv/>, Rule produces what she terms "diaristic, experimental" vlogs. A recent post called Caviar2 is only 20 seconds: a foreign female voice singing over close-up shots of her fingernails. In the accompanying post, she notes that it is a reaction to being robbed. The combination is starkly beautiful and fully emotional. Like many vloggers, Rule "pays the rent by following established rules and breaking them on their own time," working as a successful cinema verité editor.

While Rule describes an oppositional relationship between the traditional film world and vlogging, McLaughlin has found that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As a successful motion picture sound-mixer (she worked on James Mangold's *Heavy* and Greg Mottola's *The Daytrippers*), McLaughlin has recently found a resourceful way to use vlogging on the set of *The Skeptic*, a quirky indie thriller directed by Tennyson Bardwell, for which she produces daily behind-the-scenes vlogs that are posted online and will be given to the crew as wrap gifts. A bit older than most of vlogging's main practitioners—who tend to be in their mid- to late-20s—the self-proclaimed baby boomer cites Hodson as one of two artists whose work attracted her to the vlogosphere. Thoughtful and articulate, McLaughlin began adult life as "an idealist student of philosophy." She began making "short poetry films" in 1985 and later discovered a passion and talent for sound-mixing while taking an New York University filmmaking course. Nowadays vlogging takes up much of her time. Along with maintaining her "main" vlog (<http://fauxpress.blogspot.com/>), McLaughlin also hosts one dedicated to her poetry and literature (<http://the-hold.blogspot.com/>), is a member of a group vlog (<http://meetthevloggers.blogspot.com/>), maintains the vlogosphere's

"online press kit" at <http://vlogpresskit.blogspot.com>, produces audio books and sound vlogs at <http://blog.urbanartadventures.com/>, and, finally, runs Instant Documentaries (www.instantdocumentary.com/), a business that provides vlogging for special events, from bar mitzvahs to wrap parties.

While terms like RSS Feed, bandwidth, and compression may seem intimidating to the casual computer user, all of the vloggers with whom I spoke insist that the technology is easy, pointing to sites like FreeVlog, which Hodson set up with fellow vlogger Michael Verdi, that guide newbies through the process of setting up a vlog. The lack of difficulty is an accurate claim. I was introduced to the form when I was hired to teach it at an after-school program at a Bronx high school. Like McLaughlin, I had spent many a day attempting to find the perfect settings for uploading or buffering video streams of my work. Using Freevlog, I became a confident vlogger after a couple days.

In fact, most of the hard stuff has already been mastered—the pioneers ("techievideogeeks" as Hodson describes herself) slaved obsessively to find exactly the right "balance between quality and file-size. Easy-to-use blog software, distribution technology, and compression settings have all been figured out, and every day the process gets easier for a non-technical type to learn," says McLaughlin.

To even the most tech-savvy initiates, though, the sheer amount of cool sites through which to surf can be intimidating. Just a year ago, there were 20 vlogs in Mefedia's directory; today there are over 4,000. One fun way to navigate through the world of vlogging is <http://vlogmap.org>, which combines Google Earth mapping with a directory of vlogs, allowing surfers to see all of the vlog activity throughout the globe.

Becoming Your Own Network

Each of these women describes her connection with vlogging as an instantaneous spark, a moment of "clicking" during which they suddenly "got" vlogging's potential. Diaz, who lacks a traditional filmmaking background, compares this to the early days of Hollywood. "That's the beauty of videoblogging—you don't need [a filmmaking background]. All you need is an interest and desire to tell your story." Unlike the mainstream media, which Hodson says, "doesn't allow people to have voices," there are no producers or curators involved. And vloggers are so enthused about the form that they actively try to recruit others; they are, says McLaughlin, "passionate about making this knowledge freely available."

"Interactive" seems to be vlogging's keyword. Rule says, "this is the most satisfying part of videoblogging for me. I am not preaching to just people with the same background. That is limiting and useless to me." The form combines the greatest aspect of the internet—its potential for worldwide, near-instant communication—with creative production. Linking to and integrating snippets of others' work creates a community in which it is hard to tell where one vlog ends and another begins. For example, Rule says by connecting her individual vlogs, "each of my pieces feed into a larger work. The cumulative nature of this creates a body of work that transcends into a more powerful language. There are infinite ways of streaming each piece to one another."

All this talk of linking and sharing sounds a little like the core values taught in kindergarten. And at times, each woman sounds like a slightly naïve college hippie with an idealistic vision of the world. Yet



Above: A Ryanne Hodson posting. Below: Karmagrrrl herself.

it is hard to blame them after seeing the positive impact of the widespread and supportive community they have helped build through vlogging.

Many vloggers feel the form provides a greater tolerance for experimentation. Rule finds the intimate connection she has with viewers makes taking risks more accepted. "People don't seem to feel intimidated looking at this more experimental art because being able to have them comment makes it more of a shared experience. Although the work is somewhat enigmatic, I'm allowed to put an idea out there that may be completely absurd, but at the same time the audience is comfortable enough with me to share it without feeling like they need to know too much about the art world." Unlike much avant-garde experimentation, it involves rather than alienates, even with its strangeness.

If television's "reality" is plastic pop stars primped in Hollywood manses, vlogging's version of reality is normal women like Rule stuffing her bra to fit into a bridesmaid dress. "Vlogging replaces stories of unattainable looks and lives with those within everyone's grasp and understanding," says McLaughlin. "I get the sense that people have tired of the unconscious stress of perfection's unrealistic demands."



Turning the Tables: Zadi Diaz in front of (as well as behind) the camera

Folk History for the Podcasting Age

According to McLaughlin, “Videoblogging sprang from a deep cultural need to once again participate in the creation of entertainment and is in effect a return to the campfire around which people cook, eat, dance, sing, and tell stories.” In addition to its directly political purposes, vlogs open communication, create empathy, and revive the “personal is political” spirit. Diaz concurs that, “borders become irrelevant so on both a political and personal level we are able to communicate in a more successful and intellectual level. We are learning from one another.”

One possible hurdle is copyright. While Vloggers have been able to get around this by either crediting others’ work or using Creative Commons licenses, which offers a variety of publishing licenses for sharing (see www.creativecommons.org), others have simply crossed their fingers and hoped they won’t get sued. Rule doesn’t feel restricted by these issues since she has no intention of making a profit. “Whenever I do use music, I link to a place you can buy the song. Mashups [in which a song or image is taken from another artist’s vlog and remixed] are so much fun, it would be a shame if copyright limited creativity.” Sadly, McLaughlin feels that, as money enters the mix, this is likely to happen. “The day will come when the movie and music industries will keep closer eyes on what vloggers do with regard to copyright. There will be a few who will be very publicly sued. In the meantime, it feels like what we’re doing is in a private little corner of the internet and nobody really cares until such time as vlogging begins to generate money.”

There are other weaknesses in the form. “The one frustration for me is the digital divide,” says Diaz. “I can sit here and type how easy it is to get your videoblog up, but I’m talking about a small percentage of this world. If we can somehow work with people within these [underserved] communities and get their stories out, more people would be aware, and hopefully help. It’s a real concern going into the future.” Hodson thinks it’s important to teach other media makers about vlogs in order to give them a means of expression that is not filtered through “five major companies.”

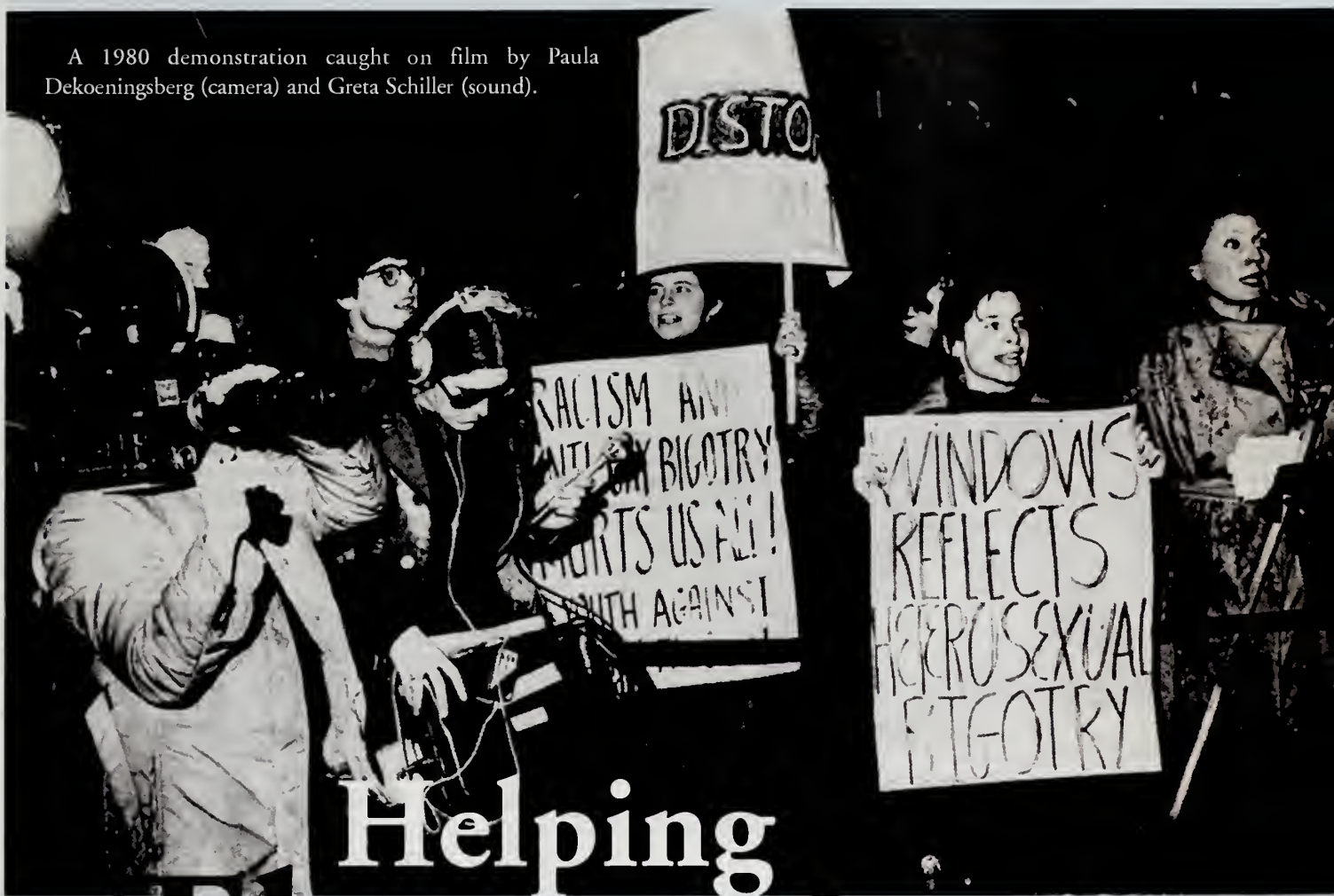
And all admit that the gender imbalance inherent to traditional filmmaking has crossed over to vlogging. “On a cultural level, women are not perceived as wanting to be technicians and are socialized and educated accordingly,” notes McLaughlin. “For the same reasons, there are fewer women videobloggers than men. Hodson, who recently attended a conference for female bloggers in California (www.blogger.org/), doesn’t see much of a difference between male and female works and thinks that perhaps the intimacy inherent to the form has simply been gendered as female. Still, as vlogging grows in notoriety, more estrogen is being added into its DNA. “The difference between a career in the film industry and that of a videoblogger is that a vlogger becomes a vlogger the moment they decide to become one,” says McLaughlin. “There are no gatekeepers at the door to the vlogosphere.” No application or resume also means there is no glass ceiling. But there is work to be done to create the initial impulse. “We need to spur each other on and support one another,” says Diaz, adding that she can’t comprehend the gender disparity. “I’m not sure why that is. Video blogging is accessible to all people. Some of the content female vloggers put out is the most interesting right now.”

As for the future, McLaughlin believes that, artistically, “out of it will come the most honest, hard-hitting filmmaking the world has yet seen—because large sums of money create an obligation to make projects as accessible to as many people as possible, and we’re catering to a low common denominator.” She also points to the larger impact vlogging may have on fostering essential media literacy. To learn to vlog is to understand the way that images are constructed and manipulated to make meaning. “Media enters our deepest consciousness with potentially deleterious unconscious effects. When you make a vlog, you become intensely conscious of media on a higher level, and that alone will change the world.” And all concur that the capability for international dialogue is limitless. Teaching vlogging in the Bronx, I have witnessed firsthand the gratification that urban youth get from seeing their stories accessible to the world. This is the power that comes from vlogging’s immediate and de-centralized nature—the direct equation between producing something and having people see it. We have yet to see how the trend will evolve or interact and/or interfere with mainstream media, but as Diaz says, “There’s enough room on the table—all old media needs to do is pull up an extra chair.” ☆



Ryanne Hodson—up close and personal.

A 1980 demonstration caught on film by Paula Dekoeningsberg (camera) and Greta Schiller (sound).



Helping Themselves

Women's organizations attempt to fill the void between
where women are and where they should be

BY ERICA BERENSTEIN

Debra Zimmerman, executive director of Women Make Movies, says she looks forward to going out of business. Nicole Guillemet, director of the Miami International Film Festival, laughs heartily at the idea of scheduling the first men's-only film festival—just in case the day comes when films made by women overwhelm the market. “I hope it will come to that, no?” she muses.

The truth is, despite how far we've come, filmmaking is still a man's world. Media coverage of women's progress in the film industry often points to success stories as evidence of systemic change, but Professor Martha Lauzen of San Diego State University, whose annual Celluloid Ceiling Report documents the employment of women behind the scenes, warns that this approach is misleading. Ten years ago, Lauzen began counting credits and calculating percentages, and found that women comprised five percent of directors in 2004 and seven percent in

2005—slightly less than half of the percentage in 2000. Read: It's worse now than it was six years ago. The report goes on: There were no women directors, executive producers, writers, cinematographers, or editors in 21 percent of the films released that year. But, it notes, “Not a single film failed to employ a man in at least one of these roles.”

“Everywhere you look you see the white man,” says Hanelle Culpepper, who made her short film *A Single Rose* at the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women, which trains on average eight women per cycle in narrative filmmaking; alumni include Victoria Hochberg (“Sex and the City,” “Ally McBeal”), Maya Angelou (*Down in the Delta*, 1998), and Lesli Linka Glatter (“Grey's Anatomy,” “The O.C.”). Though she participated in a program designed specifically for women, Culpepper does not worry that her film will be labeled a “woman's” film. As she sees it, the only stamp on *A Single Rose*



Filmmakers Deborah Garcia and Jane Alexander with Catherine Wyler, the artistic director of the High Falls Film Festival.

“There is certainly no longer a stigma to being a woman.”

—Galt Neiderhoffer, Plum Pictures



Nicole Guillemet addresses the press about the 2006 Miami International Film Festival.

is that it is a student film made with the help of AFI, and she doubts that films made as part of AFI's DWW could ever be pigeon-holed because “the scripts that get into the program really cross the gamut... dramas, crazy, raunchy comedies.”

What does it mean then for a film to be dubbed a “woman's film”? According to Guillemet, who directs one of the larger international film festivals in the United States and worked for 18 years at Sundance as co-director, there is a misguided perception that women's films do not bring in as much money. She says that a film being labeled “women's”—which usually means directed by a woman or supported by a women-specific group—isn't a determining factor for the general public or the industry. The only realm in which such a woman's film might suffer, according to Guillemet, is distribution. Celine Rattray, one of three women who founded Plum Pictures, currently in production for *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* with Martin Scorsese and Leonardo DiCaprio's production company, says, “Both the world of distribution and the world of agents remain very male dominant,” meaning that they are still filled with men interested in male-driven plots.

This is exactly why, in the early '80s, Women Make Movies redirected its focus from training to distribution. At that time there were several initiatives that trained women, but once their films were made, women had a very hard time finding distributors and successfully publicizing their films. WMM started distributing *Healthcaring*, reminiscent of the once controversial classic book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and directed by Denise Bostrom and Jane Warrenbrand in 1976, which no other distributor would pick up. But the project was so successful that other filmmakers including Julie Dash (*Daughters of the Dust*, 1991) and Kimberly Peirce (*Boys Don't Cry*, 1999), later approached WMM to help them with distribution.

After 34 years, WMM is recognized worldwide as the most important distributor of films by and about women. WMM also maintains a fiscal sponsorship service through which filmmakers can apply for grants that require 501(c) 3 tax-exempt status. The Women Make Movies workshop series covers topics such as budgeting, marketing, tax and legal issues, and festival strategy, and WMM has held screenings all over the world.

Other organizations that distribute media made by women include Cinenova located in the U.K. (www.cinenova.org.uk), which was started in 1991 as the merger of two feminist distributors: Circles and Cinema of Women. Groupe Intervention Video in Montreal (www.givideo.org) was started in 1975 by French Canadian filmmakers who were dissatisfied with their distribution options. The organization produces projects and rents equipment. Joanie 4 Jackie (www.joanie4jackie.com) is a free, alternative distribution system for female filmmakers, and accepts every film that is submitted.

In fact, there are now so many organizations and festivals with financial, technical, and distribution-related resources that support women's work that the question arises: Is it necessary to use gender as a qualifier? What role can—and do—these groups play in contemporary independent filmmaking?

Rattray believes that festivals and initiatives that support female filmmakers are good sources for networking, information, and support for entrepreneurs. She gets her medical insurance through the New York Women in Film & Television, an industry association that is part



A billboard put up on Sunset in Hollywood, February 1-March 5, 2006

of a network of 40 international women-in-film chapters. And when Plum's first film, *The Baxter*, was released in 2004, NYWIFT helped with marketing initiatives. Aside from that affiliation, however, Plum Pictures of which Galt Niederhoffer and Daniela Taplin are also partners, does not rely on support from women-specific organizations and has never submitted work to a women's festival, choosing instead to focus on top-tier festivals like Berlin, Cannes, Toronto, and Sundance.

"There is certainly no longer a stigma to being a woman," says Niederhoffer. But labeling films or organizations as "women-only," she says, is "a way of marginalizing yourself into a category." But she thinks that ultimately organizations and festivals that showcase women in an industry where so few females are recognized "are necessary, because it's true."

Executive director and curator Ariella Ben-Dov of the MadCat Women's International Film Festival, which shows experimental and independent films and videos by women directors, says that it is essential that while highlighting films by women, "you do not ghettoize these works." "As an African American filmmaker, you do think about that," says Culpepper, who adds that creating separate categories at festivals can serve as a marketing tool, but, "you also wonder if it feels like

the second class section; these films weren't good enough to be in the general program... There are certain sections that executives just don't bother to go to because they assume it's not as good as the rest." When Zimmerman arrived at the 2003 Manchester Film Festival in Vermont, she found that the films and panels on women in the industry had been programmed at the same time as Digital Day, a set of discussions on digital technology. It was like "scheduling *Crossing Jordan* against Monday Night Football." She was surprised to hear that Gerald Levin, the former CEO of Time Warner, opted for the women's panel over the techie one.

Films directed by women often fall outside the hyper-marketed blockbuster genre, which means they must depend on other ways to reach the public. There are currently almost 40 festivals that showcase work exclusively by female filmmakers. Guillemet explains that bringing this work to a broader audience—30 percent of the films in the Miami International Film Festival's program are directed by women—is a way of educating viewers, and perhaps distributors as well, since high turnout at women's festivals can serve as proof that there is an audience for a particular film. "But ultimately it goes back to the first rule," she explains. "Good films get sold." More importantly, any film,



The staff of Women Make Movies helps to facilitate the production, promotion, distribution, and exhibition of indie films by and about women.

"needs to be showcased in a good way, in front of a good audience, with people in the industry being invited—good press." And while these festivals publicize works that might not otherwise get seen, Niederhoffer questions whether these types of festivals actually provide a platform for distribution. Guillemet says it would take a very special film festival to serve a woman's market.

Catherine Wyler, artistic director of the High Falls Film Festival in High Falls, New York, says that she tries to attract a wider audience by highlighting the role of women in many different aspects of production, so films directed by men do make their way into the programming. Initially Wyler was concerned that a focus on women was too narrow. "The problem with film festivals these days is that there are just so many of them and the perception in the industry is that they are all the same," she says. But since its inception in 2001, High Falls has carved a niche for itself because, unlike many festivals, it does not revolve around distribution. Instead the goal of the festival is to help women get more work in a greater variety of positions throughout the industry by affording them a chance to make connections and gain exposure.

Women Make Movies ensures that the work they distribute goes beyond the audience that seeks out work affiliated with an organization called Women Make Movies by focusing on broadcast markets. In the past year they have had ten projects shown on cable and PBS, and some foreign television stations. "When [people] are flipping through channels and deciding what they want to watch on television, it doesn't really have to do with Women Make Movies," says Zimmerman.

"There is a changing of the guards that is happening very slowly," says Niederhoffer, "but I think that the inherent power struggle between men and women just remains an ongoing issue for women in any industry." This is especially true, according to Rattray, because as a producer, some of the same qualities that are admired in men—persistence and tough negotiating skills—are not appreciated in women.

Taplin says that she still has to put up with, "something as little as [a man] calling you 'sweetheart' in a meeting with five people," but that this is something you learn to deal with as a producer because, "the product you are working on is what ultimately will dispel that type of thing." She believes that the New York independent scene is a very open market, and that aside from the seemingly impenetrable realm of directors, women are not held down by stereotypes. Still, she and her partners never downplay the importance of outward confidence: They always enter a set explaining, "This is the money we've raised. This is the project we've shepherded, and this is our film."

Increasing women's presence in the film industry is also important because it introduces male filmmakers to women's work and presents women filmmakers as colleagues, role models, and competitors. "Frankly," says Rahdi Taylor of California Newsreel, "the bottom line is that in 'Indiewood,' which is increasingly less 'indie' and more 'wood,' women and people of color are still frightfully underrepresented." Of course, as the women of Plum Pictures maintain, women will "make it" no matter what the landscape. Fifty-one percent of the world population will find ways to succeed, although it's clear that the help and support provided by organizations dedicated to the fight will be essential tools along the way. ★

The film *Women of Clay* was brought to the US from Mexico by the All Roads Film Festival.



The Road Less Traveled

The National Geographic-sponsored All Roads fest takes the survival of indigenous films into its own hands

By Simone Swink

Of the 1,150 festivals worldwide, only one is devoted to encouraging, funding, and showcasing indigenous filmmakers. Launched in 2004, the National Geographic All Roads Film Project, based in Washington DC with screenings also in Los Angeles, has sponsored a diverse array of films from Lu Chuan's *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol* about the Tibetan volunteers who battle death and starvation to save the Chiru antelope, to Ismael Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* about a conflict between a father and his son during their road trip to Mecca.

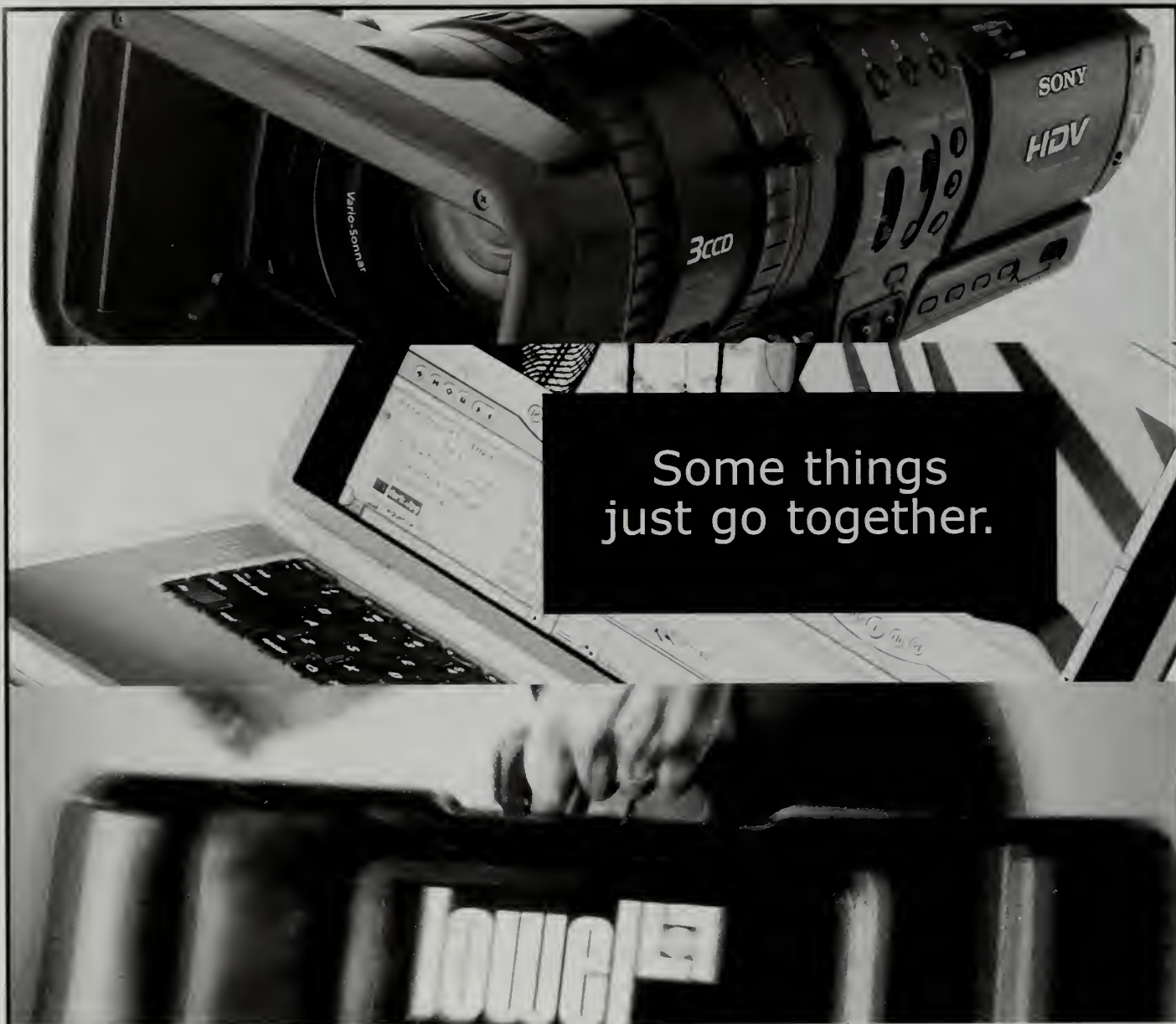
Operating under the auspices of the National Geographic Society, All Roads is uniquely positioned to use the resources of the institution to reach out to indigenous com-

munities. For over a century, the writers and photographers of *National Geographic* magazine have eloquently recorded the stories of people around the world as well as documented languages, funded field research, and explored unknown terrain. Now, All Roads allows individuals in indigenous communities to record and therefore to preserve their own stories on film. "National Geographic's goal is communicating ideas around our collective global cultural heritage and the more places that we can do an event the better," says Mark Bauman, All Roads festival and project director.

Bauman says that the festival was a way "to get people to think of cultural extinction around the planet. Hundreds, maybe even

thousands of languages have been lost, whole systems of alternative agriculture, knowledge about using medicinal plants. Showcasing spectacular stories from those communities was a way to catch up."

Two Cars/One Night, which screened at the first festival (in both DC and LA), is a short film about a young girl and boy who meet in the parking lot outside a New Zealand pub. Maori director Taika Waititi, who Bauman calls "a late '20s filmmaker out of New Zealand as sophisticated as anyone working in the business," says the festival provided the opportunity for his film to reach people who might never have seen it otherwise. The short went on to be nominated for an Oscar, and the All Roads board thought so highly of



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Waititi that they helped fund his third film, *Tama Tu*, with one of their first seed grants. That short, about a group of Maori soldiers in World War II, screened at Sundance in January 2005, and Waititi is now directing his first feature, *Eagle vs Shark*.

Arna's Children, which screened at the 2004 festival, was made by the son of a Palestinian and an Israeli who followed a group of boys that had been taught art and drama by his mother, Arna, in the West Bank. Much of the film was shot during the boys' childhood and adolescence from 1989 to 1996 when their lives were dominated by Israeli occupation of the region. Years later, the filmmaker revisited them to find that two were dead—one had committed a suicide bombing attack in 2001 and the other was killed in the Battle of Jenin. A third boy had grown into a resistance leader while another student had matured into a respected actor. Lisa Burgueno, All Roads' festival manager, notes, "The result was perspective into the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and into the specific circumstances that led one of these boys to become a suicide bomber." The Washington DC audience gave the film a standing ovation, which surprised Burgueno. "It was a tough subject, but that film made a very deep impression on me about the way these films can break barriers and stereotypes."

Not every community has spawned filmmakers capable of creating films like *Arna's Children* and the Oscar-nominated short, *Two Cars/One Night*. At least, not yet. But the All Roads seed grants (which range from \$1,000 to \$10,000) also extend to filmmakers who can show they have been authorized to speak for a particular community.

Patty Kim, a 2005 grant recipient, notes, "when you tell your subjects that you have the support and faith of an institution like National Geographic, it goes a long way. Giving funding is an act of faith and is so interpreted by the filmmakers. It's much more than money in the end." Kim and Chris Sheridan, whose *Abduction: The Megumi Yokota Story* premiered at Slamdance this year, received a seed grant from All Roads last year. Their film documents the kidnapping of a 13-year-old Japanese girl by North Korean spies in 1977. Yokota disappeared on her way home from school and, for years, her parents had no idea what happened to her. Eventually, the

North Koreans admitted their spies had kidnapped Megumi and 23 others.

Burgueno recalls "an animated series called *Raven Tales* produced a 30-minute pilot which they then used to approach distributors. The pilot, along with our backing, led to a successful pickup on Canadian television." That animated production is now the only one created by a majority-owned First Nations company.

"Without the support of All Roads, we could not have finished the pilot episode of *Raven Tales*," says the film's director Chris Kientz. "We would not have received the exposure in places like New Zealand, the UK, Japan, and Germany, which got us our broadcast commitments and funding to continue."

In fact, Kientz's experience with All Roads was so satisfying that he joined the peer review committee. Other grantees and entrants have also joined All Roads' advisory board and grant review committee, along with Spike Lee, Shekhar Kapur, Kiefer Sutherland,

and Forest Whitaker.

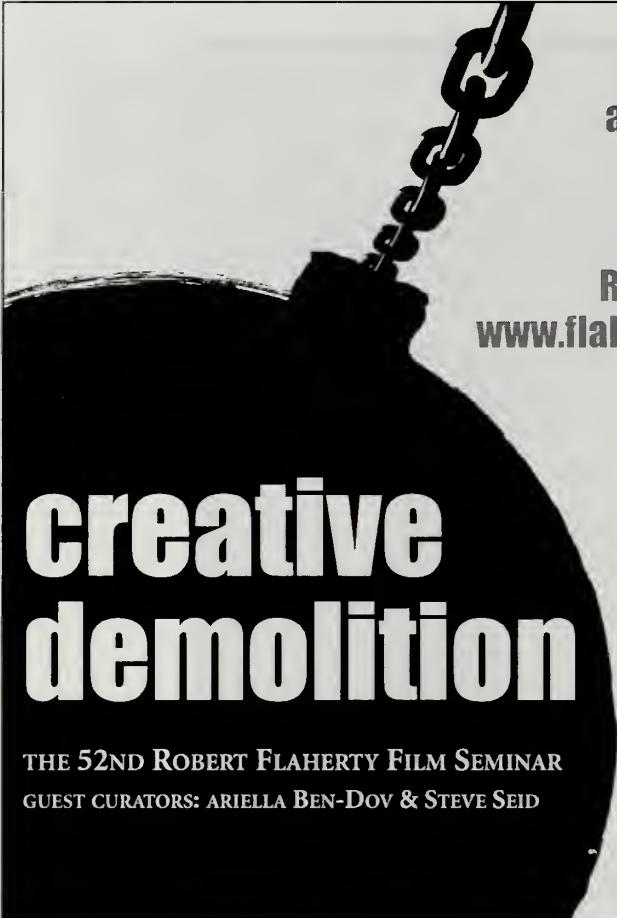
As a result of the festival's success, Bauman and his team no longer have to persuade people that an audience for these films exists. "We've had more requests than we can handle," he says. And not just for funding. Venues around the world are clamoring to host the festival. Unlike most festivals that struggle to keep their audiences coming back year after year, All Roads is expanding.

"Convincing people that there was really hip interesting modern relevant work coming out of these [indigenous] communities was tough in the first year but there was also plenty of curiosity." Kientz finds that as he talks about All Roads in new places like Santa Fe and Vancouver the feedback he receives tells him more about the niche of the festival. "We offer new insights into distinctive voices from somewhere other than the United States. And we're finding there is a huge audience for these films," he says.

Nearly two decades of international report-



From the Brazilian film, *Rocinha, An Orphan Town*, which screened at All Roads.



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From *Rocinha, An Orphan Town*

ing gave Bauman the unique perspective to create and run this festival. During his extensive career at ABC News, he ran the Latin American bureau out of Miami and also served as deputy bureau chief in Moscow during some of the region's most tumultuous years. From Bosnia and Iraq to Lebanon and Central Africa, Bauman covered the world before joining the National Geographic Channel in 2000. He helped launch the channel's daily news broadcast, which eventually morphed into a daily documentary broadcast. But the power of all those news stories never had the impact he sought. "After almost two decades in the news business, it's possible to do thousands of stories about a place without changing the way people feel about it. But one great feature film like *Whale Rider* creates a seismic shift in perceptions about New Zealand, because film engages the heart."

The desire to see how other people live is universal. Exactly the reason Bauman thinks the festival is so successful. "You can read a hundred stories about Iran or New Zealand and the Maori communities there and not really get a sense of them as human beings," he says. But one well-made film can create a connection, which makes you want "to get to know these people." ★

Applications for funding are reviewed quarterly by the All Roads board. See www.nationalgeographic.com/allroads for more information.

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You Say You Want a Revolution?

Jonathan D. Krane outlines his plan for fixing the movie-making industry

By Ethan Alter

A Revolutionary Approach to the Art and Science of Moviemaking: A Treatise on Fixing the Accidental Industry, by Jonathan D. Krane, 432 pages. (Creative Vision Publishing; 2005)

"What's the matter with Hollywood?" has been a popular industry question since... well, since the very beginning of Hollywood. But the chatter swelled to new levels in 2005 as reports of lackluster box-office returns and diminishing attendance had studio execs quaking in their Armani suits. At this point, it almost doesn't matter whether the slump is real or simply the product of hyperbolic entertainment journalists. The perception both inside and outside of Hollywood is that the film industry is in trouble and dramatic changes need to occur to ensure its survival.

That's why companies like Mark Cuban's HDNet Films are experimenting with new distribution patterns, namely releasing movies simultaneously on movie screens, DVD, and pay-TV; major studios are shortening the cinema-to-DVD release window; and blockbusters like *Superman Returns* (2006) are posting behind-the-scenes videos online. Everyone is trying to figure out how the industry can get its groove back. It would be nice if there was someone to tell Hollywood exactly what it's doing wrong, but who is bold (or crazy) enough to claim that he/she alone holds the key to Hollywood's salvation?

Enter Jonathan Krane, veteran movie producer (*Phenomenon*, 1986; *Look Who's Talking*, 1989), talent manager, educator, and author of the ambitiously titled new book *A Revolutionary Approach to the Art and Science*

of Moviemaking: A Treatise on Fixing the Accidental Industry. Written partly as a textbook for his recently founded film school, The Krane Academy of Motion Pictures, *A Revolutionary Approach* is a 400-page diatribe against the modern film industry or, as Krane dubs it, the Accidental Industry. Why accidental? "Because it [has] no articulated, published, or even agreed-upon processes, activities, forces, powers, job functions, rites of passage or even any definitions of commonly used words," he writes in his introduction. In other words, Hollywood is basically making up the business of filmmaking as it goes along. To Krane, this is a significant departure from traditional business models, which operate on a clearly defined set of principals and objectives. In contrast, the only forces he sees guiding the film industry are of the

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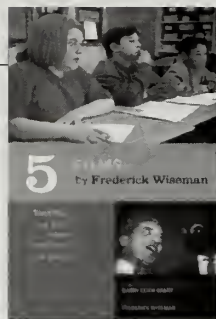
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Darwinian and Kafkaesque variety. "I call... the Accidental Industry 'Darwinian' because it mimics the jungle dynamics of Darwin's Fundamental Principle known as 'The Survival of the Fittest,'" he writes, adding that its "unpredictability, irrationality and terrifying endless distortions and dangers" also give it a Kafkaesque hue. Krane's overarching point is that the industry's lack of strong guiding principles is at the root of its myriad of problems. And if the studios don't change their ways soon, their decline will continue unchecked.

Naturally, Krane has a few modest proposals for what those guiding principles should be. Forget the Accidental Industry, he says, Hollywood needs to be reborn as the "New Art and Science," a new and improved approach to filmmaking built on Five Fundamental Principles (as you can probably tell, capital letters abound in the book). These principles break down as follows:

1) Production is five chronological stages from finding the idea to completing post-production.

2) The independent film has a heretofore unarticulated definitive meaning and is a dying art form that can be saved.

3) All power comes from three sources: talent, production, and distribution.

4) The cash flow, cash-on-cash return, and net profits from a film are, in fact, easily defined and rarely generated, making most films failures.

5) Mastering creative problem solving is different in this industry than others.

Each of these points is discussed at length in the book's corresponding five sections, but Krane's general approach to the movie industry can basically be summed up as: Shut up and let the producer do his job. In the New Art and Science, the producer is God or at least the closest you can get to it; he or she is the "one person without whom the entire industry would cease to exist."

This may sound remarkably self-centered, but it's consistent with the way Krane has operated for much of his career. He first broke into Hollywood in 1981 as the president and CEO of Blake Edwards Entertainment, an independent production company he founded with the director Blake Edwards. During his tenure there, he

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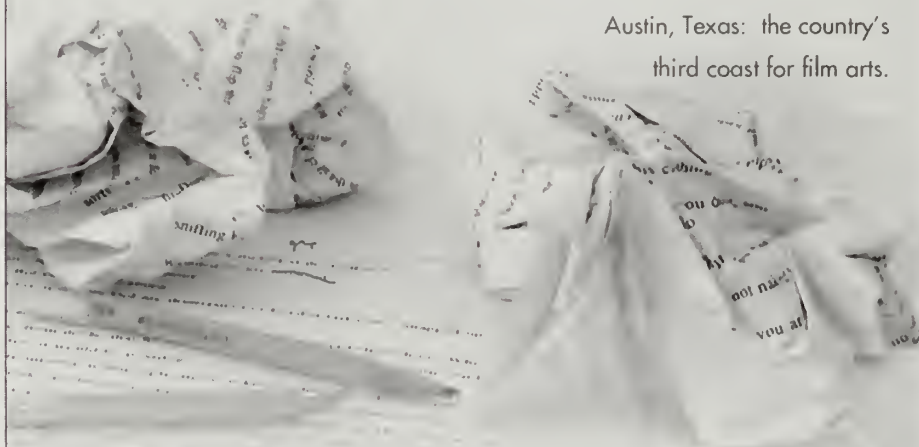
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served a dual role as both Edwards' producer - and manager, which meant that he more or less controlled all aspects of the filmmaking process, from finding scripts to choosing writers and actors to exploring profitable distribution avenues. Krane continued this style of omnipotent producing at his subsequent companies Management Company Entertainment (later MCEG) and The Krane Group, where he oversaw the careers of—and produced films for—actors such as Kirstie Alley, Pierce Brosnan, and John Travolta. (In case you're wondering, yes, he's the guy who signed off on *Battlefield Earth*, 2000.)

With his background, it's no wonder that Krane has such disdain for studio personnel who, in his experience, only seem to impede the creative process. In the New Art and Science though, everyone will work together to ensure that the producer's vision is fully realized from the genesis of the idea to the ancillary release patterns. How exactly will this changeover happen? Well, Krane is a little vague on that point, although he does describe in great detail how the new industry will operate once it is up and running. It all starts with the producer finding the right idea. But wait! Even that's not quite as simple as it sounds. According to Krane, in order for an idea to be *right* (italics are his), it has to satisfy nine creative criteria and six business criteria, which include certain commercial potential and the ability to attract major stars. These *right* ideas can be found by reading books and magazines, paying attention to trends, watching TV, or simply flipping through a movie guide and jotting down titles that haven't been remade in awhile, (Krane confesses to using this particular method when he was first starting out.) One could argue that this approach isn't remarkably different from the way Hollywood chooses its projects now. In fact, there's a lot about the New Art and Science that seems borrowed from the Accidental Industry. It's not "revolutionary," for example, to pick material that has been successful in the past or to enlist actors with proven marquee appeal. A true revolutionary would want to blaze new ground with completely new material and talent. So the difference between the two approaches basically comes down to who calls the shots; in the Accidental Industry it's a free-for-all, but in the New Art and Science control never leaves the producer's hands.

The other crucial difference between the two methods is that in Krane's version of Hollywood everyone is unfailingly honest and willing to put art before money. More importantly, getting your foot in the door is no longer a crapshoot; the New Art and Science will be open and accepting of newcomers, and career paths will emerge to guide people on their way. For instance, when a film is in production, rather than employ experienced department heads who might be set in their ways, Krane advises using a "talented second" who will appreciate the bump in job title and will be loyal to the producer throughout the shoot. So loyal, in fact, that he won't expect a raise and will continue to work with that producer again at the same reduced rate for the rest of their professional relationship. "For the past century, the movie industry [has] been [a] magnet for people who seek fame and fortune rather than gratification and fulfillment," Krane writes. "I wrote this book in part to demonstrate this problem and explain what the *right* motivations are and why they are *right*. The *right* motivations will motivate others to seek out the information and knowledge to determine what jobs are right for them and use them correctly, thus creating the trickle-up effect of this New Art and Science."

On the surface, Krane's conception of the new Hollywood sounds ideal, particularly if you're a producer. At the same time, however, it's hard to escape the feeling that many of his proposals are wildly impractical, not to mention hopelessly naive. Towards the end of the book, Krane lays out his solutions to the two greatest problems he sees confronting Hollywood today: you can't test-market a film before it's made, and you can't know how much a movie will make before it opens. For the first problem, Krane suggests that producers make a 30-minute trailer for a proposed feature and then show it to an audience to gauge their response. So far so good, but he also adds that the film's stars should appear in this mini-movie and that any computer-generated imagery (CGI) sequences should be included in rough form as well. Not only does this plan operate on the assumption that the talent and crew have no scheduling conflicts (and why would they if they are truly in this for the art!), but it also takes for granted that the testing process always yields accurate results, something that has never been conclusively proved. His second idea is even wilder:

To garner positive word-of-mouth for a film before it opens, Krane proposes that studios design an elaborate website that would broadcast a weekly three-hour show featuring live interviews with the producers, cast and studio executives (since, again, they won't have anything *else* to do), film clips, behind-the-scenes footage, and finally a Q&A with the show's host and the audience. The site would also host various contests, one would allow viewers to suggest ideas for posters and trailers, and another would reward people for telling their friends about the movie, obtaining signatures to "verify the conversation." Krane goes on to describe how the film's entire marketing process can be made available online, by showing bits of studio marketing meetings and giving moviegoers a chance to vote for one of two potential trailers. Of course, this content will only be accessible to those visitors who've paid \$10 to become "Studio Preferred Customers," a status that will reward them with, among other things, a free ticket to the movie at a theater of their choice and admission to that theater ahead of the general public. Aside from the cost and number of man-hours involved in this kind of operation, the idea that audiences will pay for access to a promotional website is hard to swallow. And again, there's no conclusive proof that a major web presence guarantees higher ticket sales. Just look at www.kongisking.net; the heavily-publicized site featured regular—and *free*—production diaries with the director and cast of *King Kong*, and the movie still performed below expectations.

It's clear that Krane's heart is in the right place, but he simply doesn't make an effective case for the New Art and Science. It doesn't help that he all-too-often comes across like a West Coast version of Donald Trump, casually name-dropping famous friends and lavishly praising some of his more dubious projects (his analysis of *Swordfish* (2001) suggests that he saw an entirely different movie than the rest of the country). He's at his best when he's simply drawing on his own industry experience to offer advice on how one goes about securing the rights to material or finding a reliable foreign distributor. Ultimately, that's the material that you'll find the most useful as you navigate your own way through the Accidental Industry. ★

FESTIVALS

By Katie Ainslie

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassette, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org.

BOSTON INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 7-11, MA. Deadline: March 17 final, shorts); March 31 (final, features). This is a fest to reward artists for their individual talent & their expression through creativity. The fest strives to bring together local, nat'l & int'l filmmakers to Boston by promoting the world's most artistic & creative independent & experimental film. Cats: feature, doc, short, student. Entry Fee: \$35 (shorts), \$50 (features); \$45 (final, shorts), \$60 (final, features). Contact: Jean Desire; (781) 935-0871; info@bifilmfestival.com; www.bifilmfestival.com.

BROOKLYN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 2-11, NY. Deadline: Nov. 30; March 15 (Final). The Brooklyn Int'l Film Festival (BIFF), was established in 1998 as the first int'l competitive film fest in New York. Since 2002, BIFF has been partnering w/ the Brooklyn Museum. In the effort of consolidating its int'l presence, BIFF has been developing solid ties w/ major overseas film fests & distribution companies as well as successfully pursuing int'l sponsorship. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short, animation. Awards: Each yr. the festival awards a total of approx. US \$50,000 in services & cash. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV, DVD, CD-ROM, DigiBeta, HD cam. Preview on DVD or VHS (non-returnable). Entry Fee: \$30; \$50 (final). Contact: Marco Ursino; (718) 388-4306; fax: 599-5039; 2006@wbff.org; www.wbff.org.

CINEVEGAS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 9-17, NV. Deadline: April 21. Cats: feature, doc, short, student. Awards: \$10,000 - Grand Jury Award for Feature \$1,000 - Grand Jury Award for Best Short. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: all films under 50 min. \$40 all films over 50 min.. Contact: Festival; (702) 992-7979; fax: 898-5191; info-cinevegas@cinevegas.com; www.cinevegas.com.

CONNECTICUT GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, TBA, CT. Deadline: TBA. The Festival organizers are committed to bringing outstanding gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, & queer film to the New England community. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, Video. Entry Fee: \$10 (US); \$15 (non US). Contact: Dan Millett; (860) 586-1136; fax: (413) 618-9312; glff@yahoo.com; www.ctglff.org.

CRESTED BUTTE REEL FEST, August 9-13, CO. Deadline: Feb. 15; March 31 (final). a competitive short film fest focusing on films under 40 min. & documentary films under 60 min. The Festival is particularly interested in new works which are interpreted creatively, that have a clarity of vision & are of high production quality. Founded: 1998. Cats: short, student, doc, animation, experimental. Awards: Juried film, & audience awards incl. Gold (\$500) & Silver (\$250) in each category. The BOB Award (\$150 plus handcrafted award) rewards the entry that pushes the envelope the farthest. The Grand Prix Award (\$500) is a pre-juried award given to

the Best Film of the Festival, which can be from any of the four cats. Formats: 35mm, Beta, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40; \$50 (final). Contact: Eney Jones, Exec. Dir.; (970) 349-2600; fax: 349-1384; info@cbreelfest.com; www.crestedbuttereelfest.com.

DA VINCI FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, July 14-16, OR. Deadline: Jan. 15; Feb. 28; March 30 (final). Fest is looking for original works not exceeding 30 min. in length (documentaries can only be a max of 50 min.) Submissions in three main cats: K-12, college & independent. Founded: 1988. Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: Awards given in each category. Formats: film, video, digital. Preview on VHS (NTSC only). Entry Fee: college/indie \$20, \$35, \$50; K-12 \$10, \$15, \$20. Contact: Sue Queisser; (541) 752-5584 / 757-6363; fax: (541) 754-7590; davincifilmfest@aol.com; www.davincidays.org/filmfestival.

DANCING FOR THE CAMERA: INT'L FESTIVAL OF FILM & VIDEO DANCE, TBA, NC. Deadline: March 14 (early) April 14 (final). Fest solicits dance-related work for juried public screenings at the American Dance Festival in Durham, NC. Founded: 1996. Cats: doc, short, experimental, student. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: American Dance Festival; (212) 586-1925; fax: 397-1196; adfny@american-dancefestival.org; www.americandancefestival.org.

EPFC Youth Film Festival, May 20-21, CA. Deadline: April 1. Fest features works by filmmakers 25 years & younger. Cats: short, any style or genre, youth media, animation. Formats: DV, 16mm, Mini-DV, 1/2", DVD, Super 8. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Echo Park Film Center/ Lisa Marr; (213) 484-8846; echoparkfilmcenter@hotmail.com; www.echoparkfilmcenter.org.

FEAR NO FILM SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, June 23-26, UT. Deadline: March 11. Part of the Utah Arts Festival in Salt Lake City. Cats: short, doc, feature, animation, experimental, music video, any style or genre, youth media. VHS, mini-DV, or DVD. Contact: Festival; (801) 322-2428; film@uaf.org; www.uaf.org.

FILM LIFE'S AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL,

July 13-17, FL. Deadline: April 8. Festival is 5 days of independent films, panels, workshops, Hollywood premieres, live entertainment & the ABFF Awards Dinner. Filmmakers, actors, industry executives, journalists & the film-loving public form a creatively charged atmosphere on South Beach that leads to serious business. Fest dubs itself as "the premiere int'l black film market & retreat." Founded: 1997. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Formats: All formats. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30. Contact: Festival; (212) 966-2411; fax: 966-2219; abff@thefilmfife.com; www.abff.com.

HAWAII OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL, Spring, HI.

Deadline: April 1. Fest features films about the marine environment, ocean recreation & our cultural connections to the sea. The fest incl. two divisions: Student & Amateur. Cats: feature, doc, short, student, youth media. VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Meli Sandler; (808) 826-4581; h20film@yahoo.com; www.hawaiioccanfilmfestival.org.

HOLLYWOOD FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 18-24, CA.

Deadline: March 31. Annual fest seeks to bridge the gap between emerging filmmakers & established Hollywood. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Awards: Winners get access to buyers, cash, & VIP passes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$55. Contact: Carlos de Abreu; (310) 288-1882; fax: 475-0193; awards@hollywoodawards.com; www.hollywoodfestival.com.

KANSAS CITY GAY & LESBIAN FILM + VIDEO

FESTIVAL, July 20-27, MO. Deadline: TBA. Largest LGBT film fest in the Midwest accepts films/videos of all types & lengths. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: Shorts: \$15, \$25 (final); features: \$25, \$35 (final). Contact: Festival; lisaevans@kcgayfilmfest.org; www.kcgayfilmfest.org.

LOWER WEST SIDE FILM FESTIVAL, April 22-27,

NY. Deadline: Feb. 15; March 10 (final). An alternative exhibition opportunity for emerging film artists & multimedia artists. The Festival will feature a minimum of eight screenings showcasing more than 50 alternative filmmakers at



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MAINE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 14-23, ME. Deadline: April 30. A leading New England regional film fest w/ an exceptional emphasis on int'l productions. Festival seeks features & shorts "shot in Maine or w/ a significant Maine focus." Recent fest guests & winners of MIFF's Mid-Life Achievement Award incl. Sissy Spacek, & Terrence Malick. Founded: 1998. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Awards: Audience Award (Best Feature). Formats: 35mm, 3/4", Beta SP, 16mm, S-VHS, 1/2", Beta, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35; \$45 (final). Contact: MIFF; (207) 861-8138; fax: 872-5502; info@miff.org; www.miff.org.

MAUI FILM FESTIVAL, June 14-18, HI. Deadline: March 1; April 1 (FINAL). Compassionate & life-affirming storytelling in exemplary films from any & everywhere on earth. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, short, animation, experimental, children. Awards: Silversword Awards; Audience, Feature Dramatic, Short, Feature Doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: No entry Fee. Contact: Barry Rivers, Festival Director; (808)579-9244; fax: 579-9552; mauiFilmFestival@mauiFilmFestival.com; www.mauiFilmFestival.com.

NEW JERSEY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Spring TBA, NJ. Deadline: April 1. Annual fest showcases the best in independent film & video, featuring premiere screenings of award-winning works, seminars, panels discussions & guest appearances. Max. film age is 24 months, no repeat entries. Founded: 1996. Cats: animation, short, experimental, feature, doc, any style or genre, children, family, youth media, student, music video. Awards: Over \$4,000 in cash & prizes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", Beta SP, Hi8, 1/2", S-VHS, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$65. Contact: Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC; (732) 932-8482; fax: 932-1935; njmac@aol.com; www.njfilmfest.com.

NEW YORK INT'L LATINO FILM FESTIVAL, TBA, NY.

Deadline: March 10. Festival presents the works of Latino artists & people of Latin American descent. The fest's goal is to "braid together Latinos in Hollywood & independent film industry, along w/ aficionados & students of film & the arts." Founded: 2000. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: Festival; (212) 726-2358; fax: 307-7445; info@nylatinoFilm.com; www.nylatinoFilm.com.

NEWPORT INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 6-11, RI. Deadline: Jan 6; April 2 (FINAL). This Festival aims for stellar programming & claims that it has "cemented its reputation as one of the most exciting & exclusive fests of its kind." Founded: 1998. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation. Awards: Juried awards. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30 (shorts); \$40 (features & docs). Contact: Sky Sitney, Festival director; (646) 442-2082; programming@newportFilmFestival.com; www.newportFilmFestival.com.

PHILADELPHIA INT'L GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-25, PA. Deadline: April 28. Competitive fest screening int'l features, documentaries, & shorts, w/ cash prizes for both jury & audience awards. Cats: feature, short, doc, children, animation. Awards: Audience Award, Best Feature (\$1,000); Audience Award, Gay Male Short (\$500); Audience Award, Lesbian Short (\$500); Jury Award, Best Feature (\$500); Jury Award, Doc (\$500); Jury Award, Lesbian Short (\$250); Jury Award, Gay Male Short (\$250). Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (215)733-0608 ext. 249; fax: 733-0668; rmurray@phillyfests.com; www.phillyfests.com.

REAL TO REEL FILM FESTIVAL, July 19-22. Deadline: March 30, April 30 (final). Fest encourages Independent film artists of all genres & skill levels to submit work to this int'l competition, which lets students, amateurs & professionals exhibit their work. Founded: 2000. Cats: doc, short, animation, feature, student. Awards: Best of show in all cats. Formats: 1/2", DVD. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35 (Pro) \$15 (Student/Amateur); final: \$50 (Pro) \$25 (Student/Amateur). Contact: Paul Foster; (704)484-2787; fax: (704) 481-1822; ccarts@shelby.net; www.realtoReelfest.com.

RURAL ROUTE FILM FESTIVAL, July 20-24, NY. Deadline: Jan. 15; March 10 (final). Festival has been created to highlight works that deal w/ rural people & places. Works that incl. alternative country, country western & folk music are encouraged. For the on tour Rural Route Film Festival, please email filmfest@ruralroute-films.com w/TOUR REQUEST in the subject heading & contact info in the text. Founded: 2002. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta, mini-DV, DVD. preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$30-45 (final) features (40 min plus); \$10-20 (final) shorts. Contact: Alan Webber; (718) 389-4367; filmfest@ruralrouteFilms.com; www.ruralrouteFilms.com.

SILVERDOCS: AFI/DISCOVERY CHANNEL DOC FILM FESTIVAL, June 13-18, MD. Deadline: Jan. 27; March 3 (final). Showcasing over 80 of the best new feature & short documentaries from around the world. A 3-Day Int'l Doc Conference- pitch to dozens of buyers & program executives. All in Washington, DC, where politics, arts & media converge. Cats: doc, any style or genre. Awards: Awards totaling over \$30,000 in cash & prizes. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (short), \$30 (feature); \$30 (short, final), \$35 (feature final). Contact: Festival; (301)495-6776; fax: 495-6777; info@silverdocs.com; www.silverdocs.com or Withoutabox.com.

ST. LOUIS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, TBA, MO. Deadline: TBA. Annual fest brings together American indies, horizon-expanding int'l films & mainstream studio films to audiences prior to commercial release. Cats: Short, Doc, Feature, Animation. Awards: Cash & non-cash prizes for Audience Choice Best Feature & Best Doc, New Filmmakers Emerging Filmmaker Award, Interfaith Ecumenical Award, Best Foreign Film, & five short subject awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$50 (features); \$25 (shorts, under 45 min.); \$100/\$50 (all late films); discount though Withoutabox. Contact: Chris Clark, Artistic Director; (314) 454-0042, ext. 12; fax: 454-0540; chris@cinemastlouis.org; www.sliff.org.

THE CINDY COMPETITION, Fall & Spring, CA LA. Deadline: Mar. 31 (FINAL). Competition is one of world's longest-running audiovisual events. Founded in 1959 to honor talents of industrial filmmakers, fest now celebrates linear & inter-

active multimedia. Event held twice/yr. Fall event in San Diego, CA; spring in New Orleans, LA. Last yr's event drew over 3,700 entries from 29 countries, particularly in over 100 broadcast & nonbroadcast cats. 13 regional competitions worldwide. Regional winners automatically eligible for final judging for int'l fest. Founded: 1959. Cats: feature, doc, short, script, experimental, animation, music video, student, youth media, children, family, installation, any style or genre. Awards: Gold, Silver, Bronze & honorable mention awards presented, along w/ John Cleese Comedy Award, Wolfgang Bayer Cinematography Award, Robert Townsend Social Issues Award, & others. Formats: Web, CD-ROM, 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Varies w/ format. Contact: Festival; (760) 358-7000; fax: 358-7569; sheemonw@cindys.com; www.cindys.com.

US INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, June 3, IL. Deadline: March 1. Founded in 1968, open to business, TV, doc, industrial, infoal productions. Entries are grouped w/in 71 cats or 11 production techniques where they are judged in a two-tiered system. Productions must have been completed during the 18 months preceding the deadline. Founded: 1968. Cats: Children, Doc, Short, Feature, Any style or genre, family, TV, music video, script, animation. Awards: The int'lly-known Gold Camera Award & Silver Screen Award. Formats: 1/2", U-matic, DVD, CD-ROM. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$160-\$395+. Contact: Lee W. Gluckman, Jr.; (310) 540-0959; fax: (310) 316-8905; filmfestinfo@filmfestawards.com; www.filmfestawards.com.

INTERNATIONAL

ANTIMATTER: UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 22-30, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May 31 (final). Annual int'l fest seeks "imaginative, volatile, entertaining & critical" films & videos. Antimatter is "dedicated to cinema as art vs. product, regardless of the subversive or dangerous nature of its content, stylistic concerns or commercial viability". Selected works may be included in upcoming int'l tours. Industrial, commercial & studio products ineligible. Max 30 min., completed w/in past two years. Founded: 1998. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 1/2", 16mm, DVD, Mini-DV, Super 8. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$20

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(final). Contact: Todd Eacrett, Director; (250) 385-3327; fax: 385-3327; info@antimatter.ws; www.antimatter.ws.

DOC OUTLOOK-INT'L MARKET, April 18-24, Switzerland. Deadline: March 15 (final). a.k.a Visions du Reel, seeking nonfiction works of all lengths that "through their form & aesthetic qualities provide personal & unusual descriptions & interpretations of past & present realities of the world." Founded: 1969. Awards: 2,000-15,000 Euros. Formats: DVD, 16mm, 35mm, Beta. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: 20 Euros; 100 Euros (screening fee). Contact: Festival; (41) 22 365 4455; fax: (41) 22 365 4450; docnyon@visionsdureel.ch; www.visionsdureel.ch.

DUBROVNIK INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 24-28, Croatia. Deadline: March 1. Dubrovnik is a tiny city but nonetheless uniquely impressive & historical, neatly enveloped in the blanket of thick stone fortress walls. Following the rich heritage of its location, this film fest strives to showcase the very best in the world of film arts & cultural treasures. Cats: doc, short, feature, music video. Awards: Various juried awards. Formats: 35mm, Betacam SP PAL or NTSC, DVD-Region

0,1 or 2, Digibeta PAL. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts); \$35 (features); other fees (check website for details). Contact: Program Department; (310)903-0483; program@dubrovnikiff.org; www.dubrovnikiff.org.

DURBAN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 14-25, South Africa. Deadline: March 15 (features). The fest screens over 200 of top films from around the world, incl. special reflections on 10 years of democracy in South Africa. Most of the films are premiere showings in this country. The fest also offers seminars & workshops featuring local & int'l filmmakers. The programme incl. screenings in township areas where cinemas are non-existent. Cats: doc, feature, short, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, VHS PAL, Beta SP PAL, DVD PAL. Preview on VHS or DVD (PAL or NTSC). Entry Fee: None. Contact: Centre for Creative Arts; 011 +27 (0) 31 260 2506; fax: 011 +27 (0) 31 260 3074; diff@ukzn.ac.za; www.cca.ukzn.ac.za.

HIROSHIMA INT'L ANIMATION FESTIVAL, August 19-23, Japan. Deadline: April 1. Biennale fest's philosophy is that animation brings together every & all kinds of art forms & cultures & as a result animation can express more humane

feelings, such as kindness, love, & peace. Founded: 1985. Cats: animation, short. Awards: Grand Prize, Hiroshima Prize, Debut Prize, Renzo Kinoshita Prize, Special Int'l Jury Prizes, prizes for Outstanding Works. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4" (Low band), Beta Cam (NTSC). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: no entry fee. Contact: Sayoko Kinoshita, Fest. Dir.; 81 82 245-0245; fax: 245 0246; hiroanim@urban.ne.jp; www.urban.ne.jp/home/hiroanim/.

INT'L FESTIVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL CINEMA & VIDEO, June 5-11, Brazil. Deadline: March 15. The objective of FICA is to divulge, show, & award prizes to long, medium & short audiovisual productions, fiction, feature films or documentary, focusing on environmental issues, produced anywhere in the world. Films must be produced after Jan 1 of previous year. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, doc, short, TV, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Eudaldo Guimarães, Executive Manage; 011 55 62 229 3436; fax: 224-2642; fica@fica.art.br; www.fica.art.br.

INT'L FILM FESTIVAL INNSBRUCK, May 24-28, Austria. Deadline: Mar. 31. IFFI presents over

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ODENSE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, August 15-20, Denmark. Deadline: Apr. 1. This Festival is an independent short film fest w/ both an int'l & a nat'l competition. This fest is designed to screen unusual short films of high quality w/ an original & imaginative sense of creative delight. Founded: 1975. Cats: experimental, feature, short, animation. Awards: Grand Prix, most imaginative, most surprising & special jury prizes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (011) 45 6613 1372; fax: 45 6591 4318; off.ksf@odense.dk; www.filmfestival.dk.

PARNU INT'L DOC & ANTHROPOLOGY FILM FESTIVAL, July 2-16, Estonia. Deadline: Apr. 1. The aim of the fest in general is to support cul-

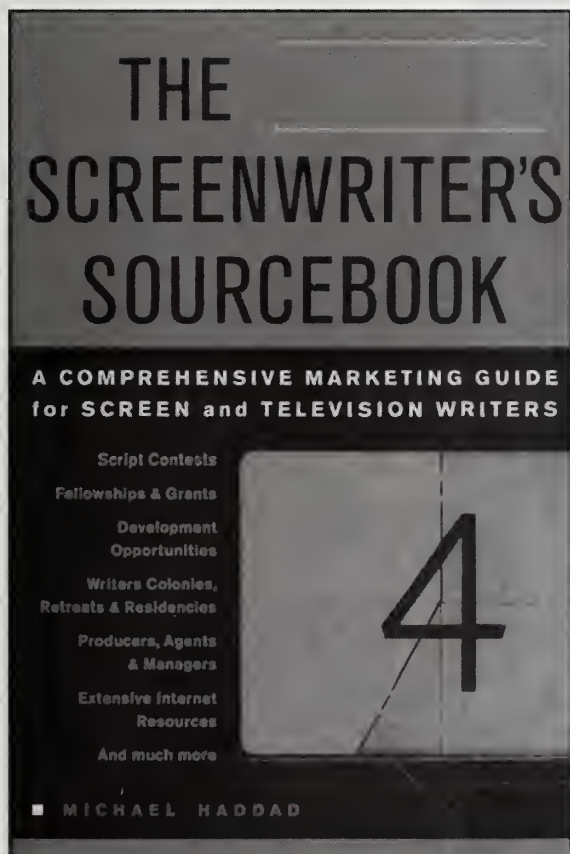
tural survival of peoples. Only documentary films & videos of high value & quality, recording human activities in social, historical or ecological context are accepted for competition screenings. Cats: doc. Awards: Grand Jury awards & Estonian People's award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Vaiko Edur; (011) 372 44 30772; fax: 372 44 30774; vaiko@chaplin.ee; mark@chaplin.ee; www.chaplin.ee.

PLANET FOCUS: TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 1-5, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May 15. Fest recognizes that the "environment" is contested terrain, therefore invites submissions in all genres that critically examine the concept of "environment" & challenge current human/nature relations. Additionally, the fest pays special consideration to works that push the boundaries of the accepted notions of 'environment'; works that present cultural perspectives that are under-represented in Canada & works that will have their world or Canadian premiere at fest. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP (PAL or NTSC), DigiBeta. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; (416) 531-1769; info@planetinfocus.org;

REVELATION PERTH INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-23, Australia. Deadline: Apr. 17. Australia's major alternative film fest. Fest seeks to bring to Oz the best in maverick spirit & individual filmic style. Founded: 1998. Cats: Doc only for 2001, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Betacam SP, Beta SP, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: Richard Sowada, Fest Dir.; 011 61 8 9335 2991; fax: 61 8 9335 1589; admin@revelationfilmfest.org; www.revelationfilmfest.org.

SALENTO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 9-17, Italy. Deadline: May 30; June 15 (final). This Festival promotes Italian & int'l independent films to the public, in recognition of the fact that movies are the most powerful form of cultural communication & link between cultures & peoples. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Grand Jury awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Digital. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30-40 (shorts/docs); \$50-60 (features). Contact: SIFF; (818) 248-2349; fax: 248-1647; Info@salentofilmfestival.com; www.salentofilmfestival.com.

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TAORMINA BNL FILM FESTIVAL, July 22-29, Italy. Deadline: April 15. Cats: feature. Contact: Enrico Ghezzi; 39 9422-1142; fax: 39 9422-3348; info@taoarte.it; www.taorminafilmfest.it.

VANCOUVER QUEER FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, August 7-17, Canada. Deadline: April 3. Annual event screens both int'l & local Canadian films & videos of interest to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgendered communities. Festival screens work of all lengths & genres & incl. panels, workshops, & receptions providing a forum for the development of dialogue between LGBT people of all ethnicities, cultures, ages, abilities, & gender definitions. Fees paid for independent work screened. Founded: 1989. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: Cash awards; audience awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS, NTSC only. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Michael Barrett, Director of Programming; (604) 844-1615; fax: 844-1698; general@outonscreen.com; www.outonscreen.com.

WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL/AUCKLAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-30, New Zealand. Deadline: April 15. Noncompetitive fest, w/ a core program of 120 features (& as many shorts), fest simultaneously presents Auckland & Wellington Film Festivals & programs that travel to cities of Dunedin & Christchurch & other cities throughout New Zealand. Founded: 1972. Cats: Feature, Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Bill Gosden; 011 64 4 385 0162; fax: 801 7304; entries@nzff.co.nz; www.nzff.co.nz.

Work Wanted

By Erica Berenstein

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. The Independent reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@independent.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by The Independent or A/VF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

AMAZEFILMS is constantly looking for feature films and short films to include in its programming. We welcome filmmakers and writers to send us their work for consideration free of charge. If you feel that your short film, feature film or documentary film that you have produced would make a good addition to the AmazeFilms programming, please fill out the film submission form: www.amazefilms.com/submissions.

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Classifieds

By Michael Tierno

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By Erica Berenstein

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COMPETITIONS

APPLAUSE SCREENWRITING COMPETITION calling for original works of an author or authors and not previously optioned, purchased, or produced. Adaptations (no documentaries) are welcome provided the author assumes sole legal responsibility for obtaining copyrights to the adapted work. Prizes: Script submission to agents, managers, producers, lunch with Hollywood execs, exposure and promotion packages, coverage, script critiques, software, magazines, and other great product prizes. For more information visit www.applause4you.com.

SHORT FILM SLAM NYC's only weekly short film competition, is looking for submissions. Competition on Sundays at 2 p.m. At the end of each show the audience votes for a winning film, which receives further screenings at the Pioneer Theater. To enter, you must have a film, 30 min. or less, in a 35mm, 16mm, BetaSP, VHS, or DVD format. To submit your film, stop by the Pioneer Theater (155 E. 3rd St.) during operating hours, call (212) 254-7107, or visit www.two.boots.com/pioneer for more information.

CONFERENCES WORKSHOPS

"CREATIVE DEMOLITION," The 52nd Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, curated by Ariella Ben-Dov and Steve Seid, will be held at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York,

June 17-24 2006. Register online at www.flahertyseminar.org. Fellowships, with a partial fee reduction, are available. Regional Fellowships, with a full fee waiver, may also become available. Deadline: March 20 2006. See website for more details or e-mail ifs@flahertyseminar.org.

ONLINE SALON which stimulates conversations on the craft and business of documentary filmmaking between members and well-known documentary professionals. Available to the international documentary filmmaking community at large, the Virtual Doc Conference is held on-line four times per year. To participate, register at: www.d-word.com/register/dwordsignup.html.

IFP/CHICAGO has developed a 5-part Producers Series, covering every major aspect of producing a narrative feature film. The sessions will move through setting up a production company, acquiring material, creating a realistic budget, raising money and creating a business plan, and that's just the first two sessions. The final three will cover production, post-production and distribution. This intensive workshop will combine classroom style instruction, discussion and case studies. Each evening includes a screening of an independent film and a case-study Q and A session about the film's production. 2005 Dates: April 2, 16, 30 and May 14 and 21. These will be all-day workshops, with a break for lunch, and optional screenings in the evenings. Pricing structure and registration information will be available March 1st 2005. For more information, email edo.nius@ifp.org.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS: offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Nonprofit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made. Contact: (212) 319-2910 x. 9.

24TH STREET WRITERS GROUP seeking new members - Monday Nights. Well established Manhattan based screen writing group is seeking committed new members for Monday evening meetings. If interested in being considered for membership, please send a 30 page writing sample in PDF format to the24thstwriters@aol.com.

PUBLICATIONS

DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO, organized by Int'l Media Resources Exchange, seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info, contact Roselly Torres, LAVA, 124 Washington Pl., NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108; imre@igc.org.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP - Film Forum is accepting applications for fiscal sponsorship from filmmakers. Film Forum retains 5% of all funds received on a project's behalf from foundations, corporations and individuals. To apply, email a cover letter, project description, bios of project leaders and proposed project budget to Dominick Ballesta at dominick@filmforum.org. Dominick Ballesta/ General Manager/ FILM FORUM/ 209 West Houston Street/ NYC 10014/ 212.627.2035.

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS is a non-profit dedicated to helping women get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues, especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: to challenge stereotypes. We support the creation of art that reflects the full diversity and complexity of women's lives. To Increase Opportunities. We advocate for women artists to be paid fairly and to have more opportunities to make a living from their creative work. To learn more, see www.WomenArts.org.

NATIONAL BLACK PROGRAMMING CONSORTIUM annual open solicitation fund/ request for proposals (RFP) -NBPC can be a resource to help turn a bright idea or life-long dream into a successful film/video project. NBPC funds every phase of the production process. Awards range \$1,000 to \$80,000. Detailed guidelines will be posted in March 2006 The 2007 RFP Application Deadline is June 2, 2006. For over 25 years NBPC has been an effective advocate for media makers telling stories about the African American and African Diaspora experience. Since 1991, NBPC has awarded over \$6 million to independent filmmakers whose work has provided hundreds of hours of programming on PBS. www.nbpc.tv/funding.php.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND for Women Filmmakers \$20,000 scholarship offered by Muse Media. San Francisco Women's Film Festival forms relationship with Muse Media to support women filmmakers to complete their films. For more information contact: scholarship@womensfilmfestival.us or womensfilmfestival.us.

THE TEXAS FILMMAKERS' PRODUCTION FUND is an annual grant awarded to emerging film and video artists in the state of Texas. Funded through revenues from benefit film premieres and private and corporate donations, the TFPF is our effort to redress the loss of public funds for filmmakers. Application available at www.austinfilm.org/tfpf/ in March 2006.

MICROCINEMAS | SCREENINGS

911 MEDIA ARTS CENTER was incorporated in 1984 and is considered Washington State's premier Media Arts Center. 911 screenings are booked quarterly. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Quarterly deadlines. Submission Address: Screenings Committee / 911 Media Arts Center / 402 9th Ave N. / Seattle, WA 98109 / (206) 682-6552 / info@911media.org.

VIDEO/ANIMATION SHOW Looking for work related to future transportation systems, gender and transportation, and social aspects and construction of transportation systems, real and imagined. To be screened at the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts Conference June in Amsterdam, 13-16 June, 2006 and screened at the 119 Gallery in Lowell, Massachusetts. Deadline is April 1, 2006. Send tapes of DVDs to: 119 Gallery/ c/o Astroline Transit Authority/ 119 Chelmsford Street/ Lowell MA 01851 or contact rocketscience@virtualberet.net.

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Curators encouraged to submit entire programs. For information please visit www.rooftopfilms.com or email Dan Nuxoll, programming director, at submit@rooftopfilms.com.

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DUTV: A progressive, nonprofit educational channel in Philadelphia seeks works by indie producers. All genres & lengths considered. Will return tapes. BetaSP, DV, dvd accepted for possible cablecast. Contact: Debbie Rudman, DUTV, 3141 Chestnut St., Bldg 9B, Rm 0016, Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927; dutv@drexel.edu; www.dutv.org.

GET YOUR FILM SHOWN ON SKY! Propeller TV is the new national channel for film and television talent, to launch in the new year on SKY. The Film First strand of the channel is looking for short films to be considered for broadcast. They can be any length and genre. You don't have to be Spielberg to be considered for the channel, you could be an independent filmmaker or even a community-based group. Please send films on DVD for broadcast consideration to: John Offord, Propeller TV, c/o Screen Yorkshire, 46 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7EY john@propellertv.co.uk (0)7724 243680.

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NEW DAY FILMS is the premiere distribution company for social issue media owned and managed by filmmakers. We have distributed documentary film and video for over 30 years to non-theatrical markets. With a strong commitment to diversity within our membership and the content of the media we represent, we welcome your interest!

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FILM AND VIDEO 825 Bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. Our curatorial vision is open to both shorts and features in experimental, performance, animation, and documentary forms. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652-8272, F: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org.

ASCREEEN-2-STREAM Film and Video Screening. The screening is a monthly event where the films are voted on by the audience and the winners are streamed on iFvChicago.com. This event is geared to inspire and bring together the independent film and video community of Chicago. There are industry professionals, actors, and other filmmakers to share script ideas and collaborate on projects. For details: www.ifvchicago.com/screening/.

WWW.VIDEOART.NET is looking for new filmmakers, video artists, producers, etc. to post their clips into a searchable database. Registration is free. We're also interested in learning about your work, new links, trends, equipment, and general film dialogue in the forums. A great opportunity to showcase your talents and discuss your work in the forums.

THANK YOU

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including The Independent and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:



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THE LIST

To look or be looked at...

By Erica Berenstein

The “male gaze” is a concept often talked about in cultural academia: Men are the active viewers, women, the passive objects. But these roles are not just hypothetical—the most sought after demographic in modern day advertising is 18-34 year-old males. So who are we making movies for? And how do women navigate a boy-centric playground?

“I’m constantly looking for films with female leads that don’t simply satisfy a male audience. They are still completely in the minority. A fun exercise is to scrutinize the covers of DVDs when you visit Blockbuster. Try to find just one female on a cover that is not sexually objectified. And you can bet the movie, or least the design of the cover, was made by a woman. But to answer the question, I have often wondered if women filmmakers are tempted to create male protagonists just to get their movie made. On the flip side, within the experimental front, I’d say most women filmmakers, once they realized that their gender is important only so far as it can titillate straight men, became even more driven to include a female subjectivity.”

—Kelly Spivey, filmmaker, *Poor White Trash Girl: Class Consciousness*

“The current target demographic for media creation is narrow and short-sighted. But this narrowness is an opportunity for women filmmakers to open doors and break creative boundaries. There are more independent women filmmakers than ever before and the number is growing. They see the dearth of programming for the larger market and are making media to fill those holes. In the meantime, the situation makes women have to work harder, be better, and make more creative and innovative films. And when the larger industry wakes up to see the market potential out there, we’ll be there to shove them into the light.”

—Stephanie Higgins, director, *The Gay Marriage Thing*

“Women must constantly fight to tell their stories and have their voices heard through the medium of film. It is a man’s business and the trick is learning to play with the boys and make sure you are prepared to handle all that goes with that when your lucky break comes. We must figure out clever ways to write material that appeals to the sought after demographic as well as the audience that we are passionate about reaching. By doing this we can tell our stories, but still get our investors their money back. It is a business after all. We must prove ourselves enough to be trusted, then we can gain respect, which will allow us to continue to work and have our voices be heard. It’s not a business where we can be sensitive or take things personally. There’s no time to get emotional.”

—Trish Doolan, writer/director, *April’s Shower*

“I don’t think that any of the media advertising created for men of that group has any reality, and most of us get into doc-making because we are fed up with the boring, fantasy world created for this set of consumers. We recognize how pernicious it is, since it extends to world news and drives national policy. Informed by feminism, I think that female documentarians know that their worlds and their values are more real. The success stories, of course, are the movies of Jane Campion, who has managed to make mature movies that speak to men and women alike.”

—Carol Stanger, producer, *Saying I Do*

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April 2006

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Post-Katrina: Filmmakers cope with the aftermath
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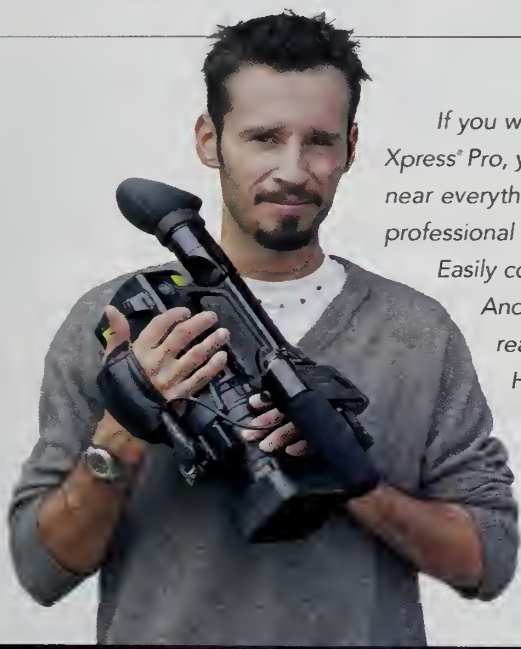
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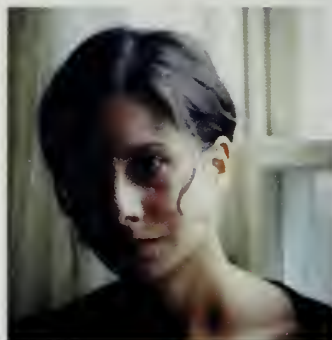
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Cover: *The World According to Sesame Street* explores the world's most-watched children's show. (Photo courtesy *The World According to Sesame Street*.)

This Page: *Occupation: Dreamland* has transcended the theater and ended up in the public sphere. (Courtesy of Occupationdreamland.com)



Shana Liebman: Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

I had planned to start this letter with my own memories of public broadcasting (this issue's theme). I was going to write about watching "Sesame Street" with my little sister who was morbidly afraid of "The Paint Man" and would run for hiding when it came on. (Back then I mocked her, then ate her cookies, but now I have to sympathize. That guy was a little creepy.)

But just as I sat down to try to turn that memory into some sort of meaningful introduction, I got a call from the director of the Cinequest Film Festival in San Jose, CA. Would I like to be on a panel about how the media affects the distribution of film? I hesitated. As a relatively new editor-in-chief, I wasn't sure I had the expertise to discuss the role that magazines, newspapers, radio, etc. play in helping filmmakers get their work out there. No doubt an interesting topic, but what did I know about how my assignments impacted their subjects? And wasn't that a dangerous perspective for an editor?

I started thinking about how I choose what to cover—and hence publicize and promote. For this issue, I got a call out of the blue from Macauley Peterson who interned at AIVF long before I arrived. He was on his way to the Rotterdam film festival—did *The Independent* want a report? Another former AIVF employee forwarded me an email from her friend, Pamela Yates, sharing news of a documentary that she was working on in the South Pacific. I called Pamela who said she couldn't write about this film, but she could write about *State of Fear*, her four year investigation into Peruvian politics. Contributing editor Josh Neuman suggested we look into a film he saw at Sundance, *The World According to Sesame Street* and Rebecca Carroll agreed to

speak with the filmmakers about the evolution of their unusually optimistic documentary.

Hannah Rosenzweig, whom I met at a Shooting People party, invited me to the screening of a film she produced which tracked young women from New Orleans. Inspired, I sent her scrambling to talk to some of the many filmmakers who were effected by Katrina—how were they coping? How were they using film to get themselves and their city back on its feet?

I put regular contributor Ethan Alter on another case; how has TV helped teach us a certain kind of history? Then a publicist called about the History Channel's new series "10 Days That Unexpectedly Changed America." Alter smartly turned the piece into a fascinating discussion with the 10 independent filmmakers whom the History Channel asked to recreate significant, if overlooked, moments in American history. Did the perks of enormous resources outweigh the constraints of a mainstream network?

Alter's piece strayed a bit from the theme—which is fine. Themes can be constricting, which is why, back in January, I wasn't even sure I could fill up an issue all about PBS. Then all these ideas started percolating, and there were suddenly more than enough interesting articles that would fit under that umbrella. Katherine Dykstra spoke to Paula Kerger in her New York office just weeks before she took over as president of PBS. Kyle Minor looked back on ITVS' last 15 years and asked its programmers how they were gearing up for a new world. Directors at other major CPB-funded programs also revealed the types of stories and voices they're currently looking for, which Erica Berenstein turned into a cheat sheet for getting your film on public TV. Finally, Fernando Ramirez explains the complicated legal language of one of the many important bills before Congress, The Artists' Bill.

So, I guess it's a somewhat random, community-driven process. If you're receptive to good ideas and sensitive to your readers' interests, an issue often just sort of comes together. That's what I took to the panel anyway.

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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Shana Liebman,
Editor-in-Chief

THE independent

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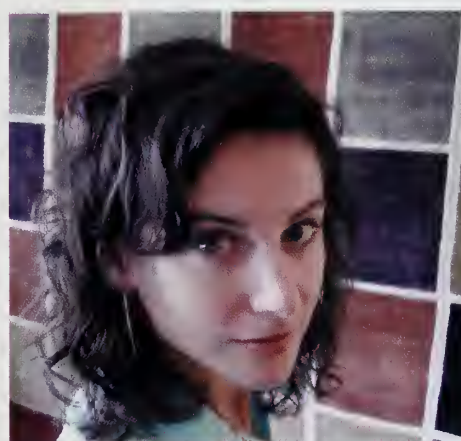
MACAULEY PETERSON edited Adam Nemett's *The Instrument*, which screened at the 2005 Dances With Films Festival and appeared as part of New York's Anthology Film Archives' New Filmmakers series. He also produced the DVD release of *Excess Hollywood*, the 2005 Princeton Triangle Show, and writes for *Chess Life*, the national publication of the US Chess Federation. He wagers that he's the only freelance writer to tackle magazine articles on chess and film in Holland, back-to-back, and may be reached at www.MacauleyPeterson.com.



PAMELA YATES has dedicated her life to human-rights and social-issue storytelling in documentary films. Along with Peter Kinoy, she founded Skylight Pictures, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

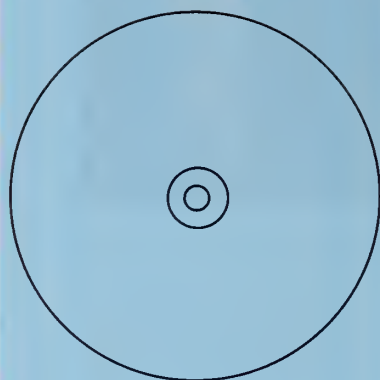


KYLE MINOR lives in Columbus, Ohio and teaches at Ohio State University. His work has recently appeared in *Quarterly West*, *River Teeth*, and the *Columbus Dispatch*, and has been honored for excellence by the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Writer's Digest*. He is at work on a novel and a book-length memoir.

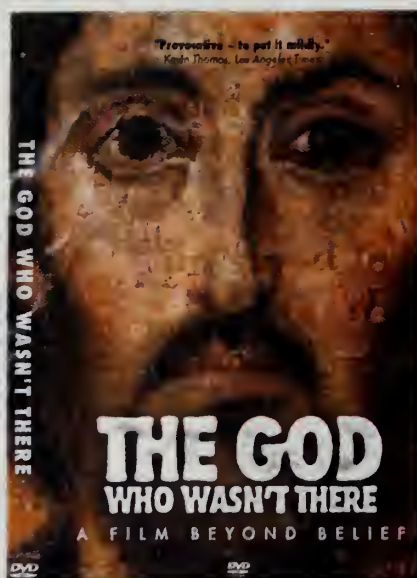


HANNAH ROSENZWEIG is a New York City native and a documentary filmmaker, writer, and public health researcher. Her work focuses on issues of civil rights, women's and children's health, and American history. She studied at Oberlin College and received a masters degree from Columbia University.

in DVD



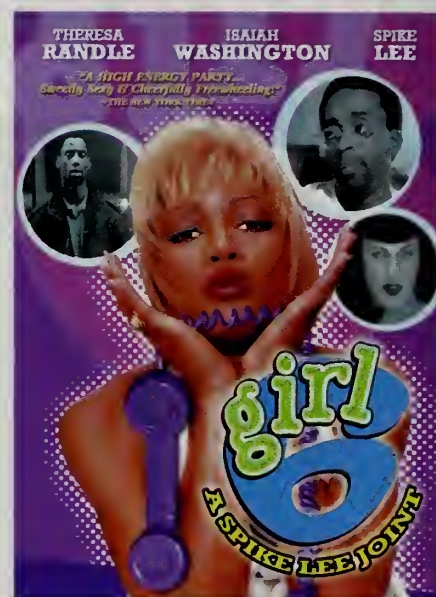
Reviews of films now available on DVD



The God Who Wasn't There, Beyond Belief Media; www.thegodmovie.com

Most of us already know what we think about religion—whether we embrace or eschew. What's so satisfying about *The God Who Wasn't There* is that it engages the well-worn dialogue about faith in terms of, holy cow!, evidence. Director Brian Flemming sets out to show (pretty convincingly) that Christianity is not based upon anything concrete. His key evidence is that Jesus' name never appeared in historical records until 70 A.D. and that Jesus' story is all too similar to other myths popular two to three thousand years ago. He also poses the question (in an interview with the compelling Sam Harris, author of *New York Times* bestseller, *The End of Faith*) of why religious discussion always seems to omit the question of evidence—why is it okay to believe that Jesus is the son of God but not to believe that aliens drew crop circles? The fact that Flemming grew up a devout, born-again Christian makes his struggle over Christianity's legitimacy all the more personal and somehow more valid. In one climactic and squeamishly fun scene, Flemming confronts his religious school's principal—much like Michael Moore squashing the vapid Charlton Heston in *Bowling for Columbine*. Like Heston, the principal ends the interview early.

—Michael Moshan



Girl 6, Anchor Bay Entertainment; www.anchorbayentertainment.com

Spike Lee's film was released in 1996, and even though I had read the script early on (Spike, a friend, asked me to audition for a small role) and so knew what it was about, when I watched the film in the theater and again recently on DVD, I was reminded that I don't actually get the premise: Phone sex is sexy. I remember Spike saying: "Haven't you ever been away from your boyfriend for a long time and you really miss him bad, and so you know, you, like, call him?" Like, call him call him? No. But maybe that's just me. If you can get past the premise of phone sex being not only sexy, but sassy and hip and a reasonable means to an end, you may well enjoy *Girl 6*. Theresa Randle, who has appeared in several of Spike's earlier films, shines with quiet charisma and a sweet, unassuming melancholy as Judy, aka Girl 6, a frustrated aspiring actress who takes a job as a phone sex operator to pay the bills. There's the requisite Spike Lee role—Jimmy, the in-your-face best male friend with a crush—often, and alternately, the best and worst thing about his films. There's a cameo by Quentin Tarantino and Madonna in a real part (I bet she didn't have to audition), and a solid performance from the very talented Isaiah Washington, as Judy's ex. The script, by playwright Suzan-Lori Parks (who later went on to win the Pulitzer for her play *Topdog/Underdog*), is competent, but in the end doesn't really hold together. Notable, however, is the film's original score composed by Prince.

—Rebecca Carroll

"A movingly human and many-sided portrait of the war." —*NEW YORK TIMES*
 "Historically, it's essential viewing." —*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*

BATTLE GROUND

21 DAYS ON THE EMPIRE'S EDGE

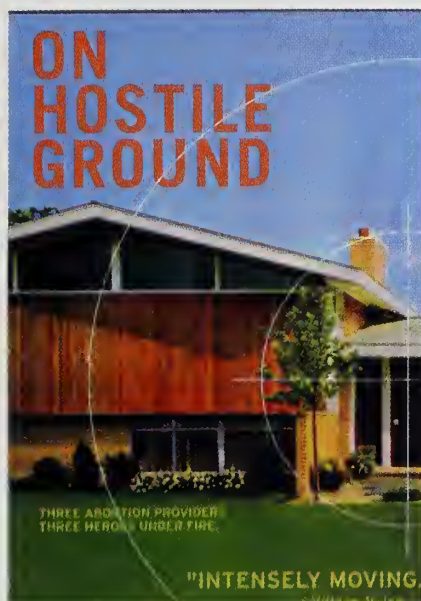
Two filmmakers from the GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK spent three weeks on the frontlines of the war in Iraq, gathering intelligence, dodging bullets, and capturing the untold stories of what has become the world's most covered and misunderstood conflict.

HOME VISION HVE ENTERTAINMENT

BattleGround: 21 Days on the Empire's Edge, Home Vision Entertainment; www.homevision.com

In what seems a bit like an ensemble documentary, director Stephen Marshall leads us across post invasion-Iraq, introducing us to a plethora of characters, few of which we get to know well. But that is how Iraq comes alive—voices from every side are heard: the American army, Iraq's most popular blogger, the people, i.e. the resistance. The most palpable character is an ex-anti-Sadam guerilla whom Marshall follows as he returns to Iraq after 13 years to reunite with his family. *BattleGround*, shot six months after the fall of Baghdad, paints a picture that—three years later—still seems to contain more images and information about the war than all the nightly newscasts since then, and Marshall does an impressive job of remaining relatively objective. The film is beautifully shot and edited, and the extended overtures, which look like music videos, are almost warranted by the way they compliment the stretches of Baghdad, that almost look like Miami. Most importantly, turn on the subtitles. Significant chunks are in Arabic, and even some of the English is hard to understand.

—Erica Berenstein



On Hostile Ground, www.onhostileground.com

"Between 1990 and 1999, violence against abortion providers included 97 arsons, 15 bombings, 16 attempted murders, and 7 murders." *On Hostile Ground* begins with these stunning statistics and, from there, introduces three local heroes, Dr. Richard Stuntz, Susan Cahill P.A.C., and Dr. Morris Wortman, who continue to provide abortion services despite the increasing hostility in their communities: Alabama, Montana and Rochester, New York respectively. The directors, Liz Mermin and Jenny Raskin, follow the doctors, their support staff, and their families through small-town America with its vast expanses and quaint charm, slowly honing in on the reasons each has put aside their own fear of physical harm with every scene. Though occasionally one-note—the story is told almost entirely from the perspective of the abortion providers, and it is only in the last few minutes that the viewer learns whether law enforcement has been successful in tracking down any of the violent offenders and then only in one case, a fairly large oversight—the film is still a moving portrayal of the risks some people take to ensure that women do in fact have the right to choose. As one character points out, if no one will perform abortions, they might as well be illegal.

—Katherine Dykstra



Ushpizin, www.ushpizin.com

Ushpizin offers a rare glimpse into the insulated Orthodox Jewish community of Jerusalem's Breslau Chasidim. Secular director Gidi Dar teams with ex-actor-cum-ultra-orthodox-cum-screenplay-writer Shuli Rand, who stars as Moshe—a poor, childless rabbi who can neither afford the rent nor a sukkah (temporary house to celebrate the Jewish harvest festival of Succoth). Out of options, Moshe and his wife, Malli (played by Rand's real wife Michal Bat Sheva Rand), pray with all of their might, and God delivers the greatest gift of all—cash (in an envelope slipped under the door). The couple interprets the gift (actually from a private donor) as a miracle, but when two of Moshe's crass friends from his pre-religious prison days unexpectedly crash the celebration, the couple's patience and faith are truly tested. If all of this smells like a religious fable, it is, so cynics beware. The film is heavy-handed (will Malli ever deliver Moshe a son—oy!) and preachy (God will answer your prayers/God is testing you if He doesn't). *Ushpizin* however still manages to deliver a sweet universal dramady of faith and kindness—that it was a mild hit with both Israel's religious and secular communities is testament alone.

—Michael Moshan

news

Sundance Comes to Brooklyn

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BAM



Robert Redford announces the Sundance/BAM collaboration; below: the Sundance Kid with BAM President Karen Brooks Hopkins, and Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz

By Nicole Davis

Shortly after Sundance 2006, Robert Redford told the press that he thinks the festival, now considered by many to be a weeklong winter bacchanal, is "close to being out of control." According to him, the annual festival was supposed to be just one tiny part of the Sundance Institute—the

arts organization he founded in 1985 to foster work in a myriad of creative disciplines, from music to theater to filmmaking.

It was here at the Sundance Institute in 2004 that Jonathan Rose, a board member at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) and owner of a development firm that helped build the



Photos courtesy of BAM

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Sundance Village, first met "Bob" and began talking to him about his vision for the festival and the Institute.

"He expressed frustration that the full-breadth of Sundance wasn't adequately represented in New York, but he felt that there was a really deep potential connection [there], and it became really clear to me that BAM was the perfect institution to be the Sundance partner," said Rose, who convinced Redford to visit BAM in the spring of 2004. He was sold after a single visit.

"He called me and said 'This is fabulous—right place, perfect people, let's go.'" It took two more years to work out the exact details of the partnership, but this spring New Yorkers will be treated to the first annual "Creative Latitude," a 10-day festival that will bring Sundance programming to the oldest continually operating performing arts center in America. From May 11-20, BAM will screen six shorts and 12 dramatic and documentary features from the Utah festival, plus highlights from the Sundance Institute's other programs.

"We are really kicking this off with film, but the goal really is to include the other art forms at Sundance," says Rose. That includes important plays like *Angels in America*, an example of the caliber of work that is workshopped at Sundance. In exchange, BAM will benefit from being associated with such a big name in independent film.

"BAM does have the wonderful Cinamatek program where we show art films and [repertory programming], but my sense is that film programming is better known in Brooklyn than all of New York. And so this will definitely bring more focus on the extraordinary film programming at BAM."



Ironweed works to create public discourse around its films

It might even shed light on a more surprising connection between the two arts institutes: The majority of filmmakers in the Sundance program come from Brooklyn.

"So there was already an internal Brooklyn-Sundance relationship," says Rose.

Move Over Columbia House: Online DVD-of-the-Month Clubs Have Arrived

By Erica Berenstein

Online DVD clubs like Film Movement and Ironweed Film Club are trying to take Netflix one step further.

Film Movement (www.film-movement.com, \$19.95/month) which has been mailing out one foreign or independent festival-favorite a month since 2003, encourages members to get involved in discussions about the film, screening groups, and online communities. Ironweed, (www.ironweedfilms.com, \$14.95/month), launched in December 2005, has been called "Netflix for lefties," and urges

members to become active around issues broached by the social-issue docs they receive each month. They also offer quirky membership benefits like a vial of



Adam Werbach of Ironweed

water taken illegally from the Rio Grande River and packed by immigrant workers, which was an attempt to highlight issues of immigrant labor.

Adam Werbach, the founder and president of Ironweed, believes pairing entertainment and activism can inspire "Americans who believe that today's mainstream culture and politics are failing to serve the country well." Ironweed's February DVD includes festival-

winner *Seoul Train*, directed by Jim Butterworth, Aaron Lubarsky, and Lisa Sleeth. The film explores an underground network that helps North Korean refugees flee to China, where they live in hiding. If caught by the Chinese authorities, they are repatriated—in violation of international law—to an uncertain future of imprisonment, torture, and death. On the Ironweed website, viewers can watch an interview with the filmmakers or a clip of Republican Senator Sam Brownback urging people to get involved. Amnesty International is a presenting partner, and viewers can sign a Petition to Stand Up for Human Rights in North Korea, as well as follow links to Doctors Without Borders and Human Rights Watch. The site also explains how those motivated to get involved can host house parties to screen the film or find house parties being given in their area.

Stuart Litman, executive director of Film Movement, thinks Ironweed is "doing a great thing," but he worries that their focus on social activism and networking, rather than business and entertainment, might be a hindrance to their survival. Film Movement's success, according to Litman, is partly due to its attempt to brand itself under a label ("bringing the festival experience to your house") which has afforded them greater market power and allowed them to do business with giants such as Blockbuster and Netflix, who, Litman says, are starting to realize that "they can make more money off independents than *Mission Impossible 3*." Some of Film Movement's films are now shown on Continental Airlines flights.

Despite slightly different goals, however, Werbach and Litman agree that this kind of online distribution of hard-to-

find indies will soon be much more prevalent, making it easier for cineastes to see films once only accessible to festival-goers.

Virtual Travel

By Leah Hochbaum

Everyone knows their own neighborhood's natural rhythms and kooky characters. They know the best gelato store, which lazy-eyed grocer to avoid,

movies are made by professional filmmakers who've been sent out to probe the intricacies and issues unique to a particular locale.

"I grew up in the Bay Area," said Michael Coleman, a director who made TurnHere's start-up video and has helmed films on Vail, Boston, and San Francisco. "But I felt like an expert on DUMBO after producing a piece on the Brooklyn neighborhood."

The films are available to download for free to video iPods and other mobile devices.



Competitive eater Crazy Legs Conti's New York TurnHere tour

and the local bar that waters down the drinks. But tourists rarely get to see these things, which is why former journalist Bradley Inman decided to launch Turnhere.com, a website that streams two- to five-minute videos, each providing an insider's perspective on a specific geographic area.

"I've always been interested in how we interact with our communities," said Inman, who used to write a column for the *San Francisco Chronicle* called "Living in the Bay Area." He views the site as a "video version of sites like Citysearch.com."

Inman also intends TurnHere to be "the first community for professional internet filmmakers" since so many of them have been "kicked around and abused by Hollywood." And indeed, all the

Turnhere.com streamed 250,000 videos a month before it even launched in early February, and Inman anticipates adding 20 to 50 films each month, eventually housing more than 1,000. During our 15-minute phone interview, new videos from Montclair, New Jersey and San Francisco's Mission region were added to the site.

"Our vision is to document neighborhoods all over the world," Inman says, adding that films chronicling parts of Bangkok, Paris, and Canada will soon be uploaded to the site. He hopes that the site's user-friendly manner—software doesn't need to be downloaded; just press play—will make it a logical destination for would-be vacationers. Or for people like himself, who have a natural curiosity for places they've

never been.

"America's fabric is far more interesting than Hollywood would have us believe," he says.

Round-the-Clock DOCs

By Simone Swink

Launched in early 2006, the Documentary Channel (DOC) aims to "show the best independent documentaries to the most people we can," says president Tom Neff. To accomplish that, DOC is now airing 24 hours a day to DISH Network's 12 million subscribers.

The success of high profile features like *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *March of the Penguins* convinced Neff that there was a market for a channel devoted exclusively to indie docs. There is a surfeit of award-winning documentary film content that never makes it onto television or outside of art-house theatres. And though cable channels like Discovery and HBO air docs that fit their niches in the broadcast spectrum, until now, no singular channel for independent documentary film has ever existed.

DOC's annual network feed will include 250 hours of programming, including 70 Oscar-winning or nominated films, as well as a number of Sundance and Telluride winners. Many of the films licensed will have their American or world television premieres on the Documentary Channel.

Neff notes that the channel purchases "quarterly, although the search for programming is naturally ongoing. We would like to be 3 to 9 months ahead: That is, we work out the licensing deal with the filmmaker/distributor, and it takes about 4 months to get it on

the air from the close of the deal."

Also, there are no restrictions on subject matter. "We only ask that they be good," Neff says. "We take docs of all lengths, genres, and date of production from classics to cutting edge." He adds that the programming staff tends to be partial to shorts because they "recognize the busy schedule of viewers and the lack of venues for short docs."

Check out the schedule, the submissions policy, and the amusing blog at www.documentarychannel.com.

Obituary: Chris Penn



Chris Penn, whose prolific work in independent film spanned more than two decades, died on January 24 from an enlarged heart and the effects of multiple medications. Known for taking regular-Joe roles, Penn was probably best known for his part as Nice Guy Eddie in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992)—although he also appeared in *True Romance*, *Rumble Fish* and more recently *Kiss Kiss (Bang Bang)* and *Corky Romano*. The younger brother of Academy Award-winning actor Sean Penn, Chris began acting at 12 years old. *The Darwin Awards*, Penn's latest film, debuted at Sundance 2006. He will be missed.

ASK THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

How can I get my work onto public television?

There are many doors into the labyrinthine world of public television. Some are open to you as a producer sans project, others are open to your project. Gustavo Sagastume, vice president of programming at PBS, explains: "PBS is not a network. Even though it looks like a single entity, it's, in reality, a confederation of like-minded institutions working together as a group. It's similar to a school of fish. At a distance, it looks like one big fish, but on closer look you can see that it's a lot of fish swimming together."

Sagastume suggests a few blueprints for a good catch. One is to get hired by a PBS station to produce local programming. Check out www.pbs.org for a list of stations and job openings in your city. You might not get to work on your own film, but producing can pave the way, while earning you money and experience.

Another option is to work for one of the series that makes up national programming, such as "Nature," "Nova," or "Great Performances." These series are either produced by independent production companies that cater to PBS or PBS stations that act as production studios, such as WNET, WGBH, etc. In both cases, check the credits of the series and contact the executive producer or senior pro-



ducer. You can start as an associate producer and eventually become the producer of your own project—as long as your idea fits within the premise of the series.

Yet another option is to develop your own project with or without funding from public broadcasting

associates, such as ITVS and/or the National Minority Consortia. Then you can send your project to series that welcome independent producers and their films, such as "P.O.V." and "Independent Lens." If you received funding from ITVS and/or the National Minority Consortia, your contract automatically gives PBS the right of first refusal. A successful run on either of those series can lead to future work on other PBS series.

It might seem a gruesomely long undertaking, but look at it this way: you'll get to work, get paid, and do what you love along the way.

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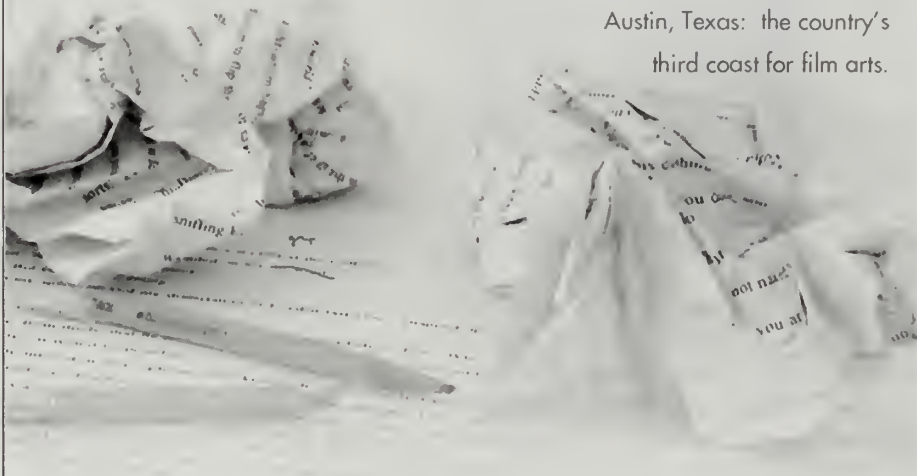
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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Dear Doc Doctor:

I hear a lot about hard and soft feeds in PBS programming. What are they, and what do they mean?

Don't let the jargon intimidate you. Hard and soft feeds refer to the type of membership service by which PBS—which has headquarters in Virginia—provides programming to its affiliates across the country.

The hard feed with common carriage is the service that includes all children's programs and prime time shows, i.e. "News Hour," "Frontline," "Nova," "American Experience." These programs are broadcast by all stations in a time slot assigned by PBS headquarters, plus or minus two hours to adjust for time zone. Failure to do so carries a penalty for the station. For you as a producer, this means your work will be seen by almost 90 percent of the PBS audience.

The hard feed programming without common carriage, for example "Independent Lens," allows local stations to choose whether or not they broadcast a certain program as well as in which time slot. In that case, your project will be seen by approximately 80 percent of the PBS audience.

Then there are two type of soft feeds: PBS Plus comprises 700 hours of programming that stations can use at their discretion and include shows like "The Charlie Rose Show" and "This Old House." The fundraising program services include all the pledges that raise funds for PBS and afford producers exposure to 65 to 70 percent of the PBS audience.

Clearly the hard feed carries more prestige because it translates into larger audience numbers, but there is a labor-intensive alternative: If you budget for "station relations," you can market your program to each local station. If successful, you could end up with the same amount of viewers as you would with a single hard feed.

Regardless of percentages and numbers, the ultimate question is: Where does your film reach the *right* audience? Considering the amount of viewers PBS has, a small percentage of its audience still means a few million people. ★

Fernanda Rossi, a filmmaker and story consultant, is the author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer.

In Good Hands



Paula Kerger, pictured at her alma mater, the University of Baltimore, is now CEO of PBS

Paula Kerger, New York public television's in-house darling, gets ready to take the reigns at PBS

By Katherine Dykstra

Midway through our conversation, Paula Kerger, who in March became PBS's sixth president and CEO, told me that the first time she saw Wendy Wasserstein's *Uncommon Women and Others* was formative. "I remember when that play aired on public television," Kerger says, "I thought about it for such a long time after I'd seen it. At the time, I was about the age of the women in the play... Well, you know..." She looked at me from across her desk, seeking a sign of recognition, understanding. But, having never seen the play, I could only shake my head and quietly admit: "I actually don't know it." Kerger's eyes went wide and, pounding

her fist on the table in front of her for emphasis, she said, "Well, *we* are going to get you a copy!"

Less than two weeks after our interview, I received a package from the Educational Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), parent to Thirteen/WNET and WLIW New York. Inside was a hand-written note: "It was a pleasure meeting you. As promised, enclosed is a copy of *Uncommon Women*. All the best, Paula"

Although the board of directors at PBS chose Kerger, 48, to lead for many good reasons—among them, her firsthand understanding of the public broadcasting system (she's been at EBC—renamed in 2001 when WNET merged with

WLIW—for 13 years), her fundraising prowess (she oversaw Campaign for Thirteen, which raised \$79 million, the largest endowment operation ever undertaken by a public television station), and her forward thinking (she directed the launch of four digital channels; ThirteenHD, Kids Thirteen, World, and Create)—it's clear that what makes Kerger ideal for this job is more basic. It's her genuine desire to share experience, to learn and to teach, to connect. During our interview, she thought I might be moved by a play that had moved her, and so she took steps to put that play in my hands—exactly what she does, albeit on a much larger scale, for WNET and now for PBS.



Kerger and Thirteen/WNET host, Rafael Pi Roman, garner support during a New York Life-hosted membership pledge drive.

For Kerger, the broadcast of WNET's programming is not the end but a means. The series and shows are simply beginnings, platforms from which other ideas and initiatives can leap and live on in the community. In February, WNET ran a documentary series called "African-American Lives." Produced by Kunhardt Productions and narrated by scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the series used genealogy and science to trace the lineages of nine prominent African Americans, including Whoopi Goldberg and Quincy Jones. But rather than air the documentary and be done with it, the station partnered with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and Ancestry.com to enable children across the country to uncover their own personal histories by accessing public records. It also initiated workshops in order to bring the content from the original series into classrooms around the country.

"I think so much of what public television is about is not what flickers over the screen and then goes into the ether, but it's 'So what? So what does that mean to you as an individual?'" Kerger says.

"We are reaching out in a way that a commercial broadcaster is not going to do. We are the only ones out there, in a very crowded landscape, where our goal at the end of the day is not to return money to a shareholder. There's great work that's going on in commercial television, there's really great work on cable, but their motivation in doing the work that they're doing, you know, it's artistic, it's all creative enterprise, but their final accountability is a financial one, and for us, our only accountability is to serve the people in the community."

Not a simple task when you factor in the complexity of PBS's 348 relatively autonomous member stations, the limited resources inherent to all not-for-profits (in 2005 PBS's operating revenue was \$340.2 million), a complicated political landscape that includes constant pressure from Congress as well as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the organization that allots federal funds to PBS, and a responsibility to an astounding 90 million viewers reached each week via on-air and online content.

"Public television is an institution like

no other, it's radically decentralized, loose in federation, it has 300-plus member stations each of whom is independent," explains documentary filmmaker Ric Burns, whose *New York: A Documentary Film* aired as part of the "American Experience" series in 1999, and whose *Eugene O'Neill: A Documentary Film* will air on the same series in March. "And Paula Kerger knows it better than any one alive."

Despite early career indecision, Kerger's rise was relatively direct. Raised in Baltimore, she entered college believing she would end up in medical school. However, "a year into it I decided that I was never going to make it through organic chemistry. Then I took a lot of arts courses because I was really interested in literature and so forth, but not because I knew what I wanted to do with my life." Four years later, "I panicked and thought I'd never be gainfully employed and got a degree in business administration but knew I didn't really want to work in business."

The combination of arts and commerce proved the right one for nonprofit

development work. Kerger landed her first job fundraising and working with lobbyists at UNICEF after following a random lead in the *Washington Post*—"It was kismet," she says. That same job took her to New York and eventually to a position working in development at the Metropolitan Opera, which was where Bill Baker, Thirteen/WNET's president, found her. "When I hired her she'd never been in a television station," says Baker. "But I quickly saw how good she was and how capable she was in areas beyond just development, so I kept giving her more responsibility and kept coaching her along and there she is."

Kerger rapidly scaled the WNET ladder, beginning as the vice president of development and, eight years later, going on to become station manager, and finally, four years ago, the executive vice president and chief operating officer. Though he's loath to lose her, Baker wasn't surprised when, after former PBS president Pat Mitchell announced plans to step down just over a year ago, the board created to conduct a nationwide search to replace Mitchell landed on Kerger. "She understands that the strength is in the stations and that PBS is a membership organization and not a network," he says.

And she does, as is evident by her grassroots approach to bringing in money and talent.

"I think that sitting in this chair, here, one of the biggest frustrations has been talking to filmmakers that have really great ideas and not being able to have the resources to help them bring the works to life," Kerger says. "Last year, we worked on this series with Michael Kantor on the history of the American musical theater, called 'Broadway.' It took us seven years to raise the money for that project... And that project was a success because we got it on the air."

"What I'm hoping to do is work with the stations around the country that have relationships with people in their community that care about some of the different genres of work that we do," Kerger says about bolstering up support for the already in place PBS Foundation. "I think there are a lot of people around the country that are really passionate about what we do."

For Kerger, independent film and PBS is an obvious combination. "These days there are more outlets for independent film. There's the Sundance Channel, HBO has picked up some indie work, but in terms of access, public television is available to 99.5 percent of the American public, and HBO is available to a much smaller group of people who have the ability to pay for premium television," she says. "I think that if you are a filmmaker and creating work that you're hoping is going to touch lives, what you want to try to do is get your work out to as wide an audience as possible."

Kerger says the key to seeking out the next generation of filmmakers, especially those without the resources to produce their own work or even the means to find their way to PBS, will be to tap local stations' network of raw talent in local communities, while simultaneously embracing the filmmakers PBS already works with.

Despite the never-ending financial woes facing a not-for-profit membership organization like PBS, Kerger envisions a technologically savvy future, one that includes VOD for PBS shows, multicast channels, podcast content, high definition, and web-streaming, some of which PBS has already begun to experiment with.

"The whole media industry has shifted, people want media when they can get it," Kerger says. "I think that looking forward, really being able to think about the content that we develop, and trying to be a bit agnostic about what platforms end up being distributed on, would be helpful."

"The thing that I really love about public television is that you never really know what you're going to get on a given night. When I sit home at night and I'm clicking through the TV—as a consumer, not as someone who works here—I always go to [Channel] 13 first. I can never remember what's on our schedule on any night because we work so far out," Kerger says. "I'll start watching something that I had no intention of watching, but it draws me in because I'm learning something....I'm interested in understanding why, and so for me, public television has been an amazing home." ★



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State of *Fear*



When Peru's 20-year war ended, many were left looking for their lost.

How one filmmaker realized that terror abroad would lead to the truth about terror at home

By Pamela Yates

The Last Shot

The mobs were ferocious and loud. They were beating policemen, looting government buildings, and smashing the cameras of local media. I feared that they would turn on us. We were shooting the last scene of *State of Fear*, which documents the legacy of Peru's war on terror, but to the rioters we were photographing their incriminating deeds. In the midst of tear gas and stones hurled from slingshots, this riot scene, which turned out to be the opening sequence of our film, became emblematic of a traumatized citizenry who no longer believed in the rule of law.

I had been shooting in Peru for two years before we arrived at the riots in

Ayacucho, a provincial capital in the high Andes of Peru. Ayacucho is the birthplace of the Shining Path, a Maoist insurgency whose violent acts triggered an epic 20-year war on terror by the Peruvian state that ended in 2000 with the collapse of President Alberto Fujimori's autocratic regime. Producer Paco de Onís and I, along with our Peruvian crew, had come to this violence-plagued city in 2004 to film a look back at the terrible years that brought Peruvian democracy to its knees.

I always wish that the last day of shooting could be the first. I wish that at the start of principal photography I could possess all the accumulated knowledge, wisdom, camaraderie, problem-solving techniques, and collaborations developed

over the course of making a film. But that's never the case. *State of Fear* was a three-year journey of discovery that began in 2001 when the Peruvian State announced it was convening a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and would be the first Latin American country to hold public hearings. For the first time in the country's history, the victims, rather than the perpetrators, would get to write history. The Truth Commission was also going to exhaustively examine what had actually happened during the internal war—much of which was unknown due to the clandestine nature of Shining Path, and the secrecy and corruption that enveloped the state's response.

The Truth Commissioners chose to

entrust us with all the ins and outs of their research, their writings, the ways they came to their conclusions because we were a U.S./Peruvian co-production. Paco and I were the only Americans, and we had three well-known Peruvians on our team: Ana Caridad Sánchez, the coproducer, Juan Durán, the cinematographer, and Chicho Durant, the consulting producer. The commissioners introduced us to witnesses and shared the extensive collection of archival videotapes and photographs that their staff had compiled to visually document the war. They seemed to understand that our film would allow their work to live on long after their final report was delivered. They knew that those 5,000 pages were a valuable record of Peru's collective memory, but that few people would actually read them all and that *State of Fear* would be a condensed version of their findings framed in an emotionally compelling narrative.

Finding the Story

Engaging American audiences in foreign subjects is a challenge, and throughout this process, I was concerned about how this epic Peruvian story would interest Americans. Why would they care? What could they learn for their own lives? How do we make history compelling in a nonfiction narrative?

It was in the intense atmosphere of the Truth Commission's public hearings that Paco and I discovered the hook: There were startling parallels between Peru's war and the unfolding U.S. global war on terror. Both involved the use of a conventional military response to an insurgency, the undermining of democratic institutions in the name of fighting terrorism, government's use of fear to justify authoritarian measures and expanded powers, and the manipulation of media to influence public opinion. We decided that *State of Fear* could be a cautionary tale for U.S. and international audiences as well as a revelation for Peruvians who only know part of their own story.

As Paco and I started filming, we were in constant discussions with Peter Kinoy—the film's editor and my film-

making partner for 25 years—about how to frame the footage in a universal context. Together we developed an approach to the characters that went against conventional wisdom: focus on many characters instead of a few and use a cinematic style that juxtaposes the incredible visual beauty of the country against one of the most violent chapters of its history (The war is second only to the Spanish Conquest). I believe that one of the most



In Peru, many children were stripped of their childhood

magnificent cinematic landscapes is the geography of the human face. Peru, with its diverse coastal, Andean, and jungle populations, is no exception. I had a 12-by 9-foot portable, spandex green screen manufactured, and everywhere we went we set it up and filmed portraits of Peruvians so I could marry these unusual faces with their searing looks to other images in the film.

After working as a producer with Michael Moore on two seasons of "TV Nation" for NBC and Fox, I learned to go after the most difficult people—those who don't want to talk to you—first. So when we started *State of Fear*, I went into the prison where Shining Path militants were held. I listened to their stories for hours. I began to build relationships with people who had served in the Peruvian Armed Forces, and after two years of explaining to perpetrators on both sides of the war how important it is to tell

what they did and what they saw, they finally agreed to go on camera. The hardest people to convince inevitably turned out to be the most compelling: The Child Soldier, The Marine, The Shining Path Follower, and The General. My most important discovery was former Fujimori congresswoman, Beatriz Alva Hart. I met her when she worked on the Truth Commission, and after listening to the victims' testimony, she realized what

her social class had done, making her able to comment honestly and apologize publicly. This blonde, smart, wealthy woman represents the quintessential bystander who saw what was going on but did nothing to stop it; she is also the character that most American and European audiences relate to, as we struggle with our own impotence with regards to stopping an immoral,

and arguably illegal, war.

Identifying the Heroes

It is a maxim in cinema that there must be a good guy. In our case, the good guys were extremely hard to find. It was only in the editing room that we realized that the heroes of the story were the isolated human rights advocates, who were tenaciously documenting everything that went on while simultaneously trying to stop it at great personal risk. As the human rights movement grew, the groups established a National Coordinating Committee (*La Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos*) and became the most organized human rights movement in all of Latin American history. In the final days of the Fujimori government, as Peruvians took to the streets in mass protests it was the human rights movement that coordinated and led the charge to get Fujimori



Yates leads her crew and their mules 12,000 feet up into the Peruvian Andes.



Yates and Cinematographer Juan Durán set up the green screen for interviews (bottom); Producer Paco de Onís (top)



The Ashaninka people are indigenous to Peru. Here, a group of militiamen.

American struggle to defend ourselves while preserving our democratic rights, but the film has also been embraced by human rights and pro-democracy advocates around the world—Russia/Chechnya, Nepal, Israel/Palestine, Colombia and Northern Ireland—who also find themselves caught in a cycle of violence. Just recently Al Jazeera licensed *State of Fear* to show across the Arab world, and National Geographic Channels International led off their new series “No Borders” by translating our film into 45 languages and broadcasting it in 145 countries—an excellent 25th birthday present for Skylight Pictures. ★

State of Fear was supported by the Ford Foundation, the Sundance Documentary Fund, and the United States Institute of Peace.

For information about where *State of Fear* is screening in the U.S. and internationally, please go to www.skylightpictures.com. International Sales Agent: Films Transit International; www.filmstran.it.com. For educational DVDs go to www.newday.com/films/stateoffear.html.

out. The National Coordinating Committee then went on to pressure the transitional government to empower the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of the country's return to democracy.

As we were finishing *State of Fear*, the Madrid train stations were bombed, and we were inspired by the fact that the Spanish response to the bombings was political rather than military. Tens of thousands of Spaniards took to the streets in cities across the country with banners that read, “Against terror, for Peace, within the Constitution.” Within days they elected a president who pulled Spanish troops out of Iraq and committed his administration to fighting terrorism—legally.

How Far We've Come

The greatest achievement of the Peruvian Truth Commission and, by extension, *State of Fear*, was that it changed the official version of history, rewriting it from the perspective of Peru's victims, its disenfranchised, and its poor. After Fujimori's recent arrest in Chile and the pending extradition request from the Peruvian government to try him on charges of crimes against humanity and corruption, Peru's national television station, Channel 7, began showing *State of Fear* weekly to remind Peruvians that their ex-president had caused untold suffering and death, and had wrecked their democracy.

State of Fear not only parallels the

Overtaken with *Joy*

Rotterdam's 35th international film festival and the first American film to flourish there

From left: Mizushima Kaori, Nagasaki Shunichi, and Sandra den Hamer on IFFR's opening night.



By Macauley Peterson

"Everything does make sense in this movie," claimed Chicago-based filmmaker Jim Finn when he introduced his experimental, pseudo-documentary film, *Interkosmos*, at the 2006 International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Finn seemed to be preempting criticism that his 70-minute feature, part of IFFR's *Sturm und Drang* program of features and documentaries by young filmmakers investigating new angles in cinematography, was confusing or even disjointed—not the sort of introduction that usually inspires audience confidence. Yet, viewed from the right figurative

angle, *Interkosmos*, was an intriguing genre-bending fantasy. It posited the existence of a secret space program of the Soviet-dominated German Democratic Republic (a.k.a. East Germany) during the 1970s. The visual motif was '70s documentary; the footage appeared to come from the bowels of some long lost Communist film archive.

"The real basis of the film," says Finn, who also stars, "aside from my obsession with Communism, was my fantasy about a utopian space exploration program." The general lack of knowledge in the West about the GDR and communism gave Finn a lot of leeway to invent his

own reality. Rather than making a straight faux documentary, however, Finn deliberately cut documentary-like elements, aiming for a more experimental work. Add to the mix a series of musical numbers, and it's easy to understand how some viewers could get lost.

It wasn't a shock when the Dutch audience not only followed the plot, but seemed quite taken by the visual style and anachronistic musical sequences. Indeed, Rotterdam has always focused on innovative, independent cinema from around the world, embracing the more offbeat, non-commercial undertakings. In addition to *Sturm und Drang*, the IFFR



Rotterdam's Pathe Theater, host to the festival, glows from the middle of Schouwburgplein in 2005

annually includes other features programs, as well as several short programs. These range from "Maestros: Kings and Aces," Rotterdam's selection of films from master auteurs, to "Time and Tide," focusing on "the heartbeat of the world," with features and documentaries that reveal the social, political, and cultural commitment of filmmakers. And, since 1995, the annual Tiger Awards competitive program puts around 15 films to an international jury responsible for doling out three \$10,000 prizes.

The 2006 fest added a special program entitled "White Light" (a reference to a Velvet Underground song), which offered a series of "drugs-driven" films including, "hallucinating cinema," billed as a "neglected but important part of experimental filmmaking," and "narco cinema" in which drugs are intimately linked to plot in various ways. The Holland premiere of a film like Andy Fickman's *Reefer Madness*, a musical parody of a 1936 American anti-drug propaganda film,

certainly spawned a crass joke or two, but "White Light" also showcased many serious and sombre tales on the negative effects of drug addiction, including one of the best-titled films in the festival, *Gucci Crackheads Battle Nihilism*, the story of a San Francisco cocaine junkie.

In all, some 450 filmmakers attended the 12-day event, which screened films from 65 countries, and attracted 358,000 viewers. As anyone who's attended a festival of this size can attest, one of the greatest challenges for fest-goers was simply deciding which films to see. The 20 venues scattered around downtown Rotterdam each played between two and six films a day, so a prime time slot might offer nearly 20 choices. Add to that, late night "talk show" panel discussions, exhibitions, and other ancillary events, (and yes, the parties) and you have to be prepared for a hectic schedule.

One of the more obscure programs was offered by the Moscow-based Cine Fantom film club, which was built upon

the mid-'80s counterculture movement of director Igor Aleynikov and now serves as a champion of, and screening venue for, new Russian cinema, which is largely independent of state sponsorship. The program featured original works by the late Aleynikov and his brother Gleb, as well as by video artist Boris Yukhananov, and a new generation of Russian avant-garde director-artists and independents.

Notable among the later group was *Manga*, from visual-effects-guru-cum-director, Petr Khazizov. *Manga* is set in the urban jungle of contemporary Moscow, in which the lives of two reckless teenagers, a beautiful young model and a wealthy pseudo-intellectual, become entwined through a series of bizarre occurrences. The film blurs the line between reality and imagination as the teenagers seem to slip in and out of a video game, and as the events of the movie unfold, the viewer is forced to question his/her expectations of what is real.

Manga won the prize for Best

International Feature at the New York Independent Film Festival last November. It is utterly unlike the Western stereotype of "Russian cinema," which favors labored pacing and heavy use of "psychological camera movement"—slow, with a preference for close-ups. Khazizov cites *Manga* as part of a new style of cinematography in Russia (after the relative paucity of films and scant cinematic innovation in the '90s.) He wants Russian film to free itself from clichés and to reflect the changing situation in Russia. Part of what makes *Manga* stand out is the frequent use of telescopic crane shots to achieve fluid, dreamlike, three-dimensional camera moves.

Khazizov's visual effects house, Cinemateka, has been a pioneer in the field of digital effects in Russian film, and he advocates for the broad use of CGI, "not just for monsters." Despite its whizbang visual appeal, *Manga* was produced independent of state or Russian TV sponsorship for a modest \$710,000.

When asked whether the current political climate in Russia hinders independent artistic expression, Khazizov was nonchalant, saying that he has encountered no government resistance to his own work. Although he has yet to make an overtly political film, he insists that there are no barriers to doing so, but his cynicism towards politics generally leads him to look elsewhere for storylines.

De facto government censorship is the subject of the documentary *Viva Zapatero!*, a product of Italian satirist and television star Sabina Guzzanti. Imagine if the Bush administration got Comedy Central to cancel "The Daily Show," and then Jon Stewart decided to make a documentary about it. That's the gist of *Viva Zapatero!* (Guzzanti says she had never heard of Jon Stewart until she went to Sundance this year, where many festival-goers asked her if she was a fan.)

The title of her documentary is a riff off the 1952 biopic *Viva Zapata!*, directed by Elia Kazan, but it substitutes the name of Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero, a symbol of political *cojones* in Europe. Guzzanti's TV show, *RAIor: Weapons of*

Mass Distraction, which satirized the Italian government and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi personally, was cancelled by executives at the RAI 3 network after only one episode, a decision that the film suggests may have been engineered by the Berlusconi administration.

In a country ranked 53rd in press free-



The VPRO Tiger Award winners Han Jie, Kelly Reichardt, and Manuel Nieto Zas with festival director, Sandra den Hamer, third from right

dom by the media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders, *Viva Zapatero!* has been described by some as "Italy's *Fahrenheit 9/11*," although less for its content than for its demonstration of how a documentary can break into the mass consciousness. The film received a 15-minute standing ovation after its premiere at the Venice International Film Festival, and its subsequent theatrical release in Italy brought in 200,000 people in the first week.

Viva Zapatero! was shot on DV with a Sony PD150 by a crew of just three, including Guzzanti, and played in the "Time and Tide" program at Rotterdam. Another film from that category, which is simultaneously smaller and infinitely larger, is *Into Great Silence*, a two hour and forty minute journey into the lives of monks at the Grande Chartreuse monastery in the French Alps. German filmmaker, Philip Gröning, was given permission to film, by himself, in the monastery for six months and painstakingly documents the daily lives of its secluded occupants on glorious 35mm.

The brothers have all taken oaths of silence and, aside from two brief scenes, no one speaks in this film. So while a dose of patience is required, the result is a uniquely meditative experience.

Old Joy is also a remarkably spare film, rife with emotional subtext that resonates in its subtlety. The short feature glimpses

two lifelong friends who reunite for a brief camping excursion to a hot spring in the Cascade Mountains, east of Portland. While professing an enduring kinship, the pair has grown apart over the years, and this dichotomy plays itself out in a deliberate, but poignant fashion.

Jon Raymond, who penned the short story on which the film is based, calls it, "a kind of contemporary Cain and Abel story... in reverse. Two estranged brothers traveling back into a primeval garden and reuniting."

New York writer/director Kelly Reichardt worked on *Poison* (1991), by Todd Haynes, who is among the executive producers of *Old Joy*; this is her second feature as a director. Its leisurely pacing won't appeal to everyone, but the Rotterdam jury was evidently won over by the film's beautiful silences exploring the lost joys of youth. *Old Joy* was the first film from the U.S. in competition at Rotterdam in three years, and lo and behold, it brought home one of the three Tigers, becoming the first American film ever to win the Rotterdam jury prize. ★

Q&A

Linda Goldstein Knowlton and
Linda Hawkins Costigan

The World According to Sesame Street



By Rebecca Carroll

For most people in America, “Sesame Street” warrants no introduction. The long-running PBS program and landmark, nonprofit children’s educational organization, Sesame Workshop (renamed from Children’s Television Workshop in 2000), has been viewed in thousands of homes across the country since 1968 when it first began changing the way we look at television with its smart, innovative, and provocative programming for kids.

In *The World According to Sesame Street*, a Participant Productions film that premiered earlier this year at Sundance, filmmakers Linda Goldstein Knowlton and Linda Hawkins Costigan take a close, heartrending look at the challenges and complexities of producing the world’s most-watched and beloved children’s television show in countries such as Bangladesh, South Africa, and Kosovo.

Rebecca Carroll: How did you come to choose ‘Sesame Street’ as the subject of this documentary?

Linda Hawkins Costigan: We had heard about Kami, the HIV-positive puppet on “Takalani Sesame”—South Africa’s version of ‘Sesame Street’—and we were so intrigued that ‘Sesame Street’ had found a way to put a face on HIV/AIDS for two- to six-year-old kids. Upon further research, we found that not only was ‘Sesame Street’ dealing with



The World According to Sesame Street examines the show's impact around the world, like in Bangladesh (above and left).

HIV/AIDS in South Africa, but with the idea of mutual respect by promoting a sense of peace in its Israeli/Palestinian/Jordanian productions, and with girls' education in Egypt. We just thought, 'Oh my God, this is 'Sesame Street,' and they are dealing with some of the biggest issues for an audience of little people.'

Linda Goldstein Knowlton: Just to finish that thought, we both grew up with 'Sesame Street' and it made this massive impact on us. And here they were taking this very American show to different countries and making it culturally indigenous all around the world. What an amazing feat. How do they do that? Are they actually using Muppets as a catalyst for social change?

RC: And what do you think it is about 'Sesame Street' that makes it an American show, apart from the fact that it was founded and is produced here?

L GK: First, 'Sesame Street' is a show that most people think of as an American show,

but the Sesame Workshop is a not-for-profit organization that goes to different countries and says: 'Tell us what your children need.' Then they have meetings and seminars where they bring together child educators and child psychologists and children's artists and animators and all of these different people who work the world of children, to create education and entertainment for them. In that way, the people on the ground within a certain country, for instance Bangladesh, get to create their own curriculum and their own puppets and their own street, and so then 'Sesame Street' is no longer an American show—now it's a Bangladeshi show.

RC: There's a voiceover at the start of the film that talks about how hate is taught and how it's not a matter of if children are learning from television, but what they're learning from television. Hate is a real part of our world—how did you handle this in the film?

LHC: We were lucky enough to go to Kosovo to watch them create a 'Sesame Street' there. As we all know, Kosovo is very ethnically divided. The hatred is palpable. We talked to three-, four-, five-year-old Albanian and Serbian children who were already talking about not wanting to know the other, or who knew nothing about the other. These children live right next door to each other in some cases, and they don't know that the other exists. So what 'Sesame' is trying to do is to introduce one set of children to the other. They are saying: 'Look, the Albanian child brushes his teeth or does his homework. The Serbian child brushes his teeth or does his homework.' It's all about humanizing the other.

RC: And it has to be that rudimentary, doesn't it?

LHC: It really does because as soon as you are able to create a common denominator, which is what 'Sesame' has done in so many



On "Sesame Street" South African children are taught that differences shouldn't divide.

different ways around the world, you can't hate someone as readily.

RC: As a black woman, the notion of teaching and witnessing palpable hatred hits home for me. How do you stop the teaching of hatred—it has to go beyond making films, right?

LGK: In Kosovo, we interviewed several of the adults who came together to help create the show, and they each had incredibly dangerous and dire experiences of being chased, jumping off buildings, and horrible things happening to family members, and yet these people all came together and sat at the same table because they wanted to create something new for their children—they wanted to end the cycle. And yes, it's going to take more than making documentaries, but it's a start. And if you can start the ball rolling, if you can start to break the cycle, you are making progress.

RC: I noticed in the film notes that there is an action campaign that goes along with the film. Can you make a film like this without an action or social change agenda?

LGK: Sesame approaches each project they do with the sense that everything has equal

weight: research, production, and outreach. So every show they do has an outreach component to help reinforce its message. It's not just a half-hour show that you see and then it goes away. Sesame books or games or video or radio shows are all going to help reinforce the ideas they're trying to convey with the hope that one or more catch fire and continue to grow and grow.

RC: I love the sort of hope-springs-eternal concept behind 'Sesame Street,' which has really built its foundation on this abiding faith in kids and the human spirit. As filmmakers, did you feel a sense of obligation to honor that?

LHC: You're talking to maybe two of the most Pollyanna people, but I will tell you that we didn't set out to make an inspiring film. I will attest to that right now. We set out to examine and explore, and we were so inspired that we couldn't help making a film that we hoped would inspire others.

RC: What was it like introducing the film to Participant Productions?

LGK: It's been amazing. I mean, we walked in and the first person we met said, 'I love

'Sesame Street!' We had already gone on two trips and cut together a trailer. We showed them that and our proposal, and, you know, they got it—they got that it fit with the part of their mission that promotes social action through film. They've been fantastic. They were surprised like a lot of people that the film has such a political face to it, but education is political, and the beginnings of 'Sesame Street' are political, born out of the civil rights movement.

RC: What do you hope this film will do for its American audiences?

LHC: As we were talking earlier, children are not born to hate. They are taught to hate. If we can realize this, and not to sound Pollyanna about it, we have a responsibility, especially people in our field, over how we talk to our children and what our children are exposed to.

RC: My concern is that, as with race relations in this country, to undo the hate that has existed for prior generations is to create dangerous and sometimes as harmful internal struggles for current generations.

LHC: But as Linda [GK] said, 'Sesame Street' was born in the 1960s out of the Civil Rights Movement. It was the first television show to include a multiracial cast and in an urban setting. Their social agenda was multicultural diversity even though they didn't have that phrase back then, and the show was not accepted on some of the public television stations for that reason. I was born in 1968, and I started watching 'Sesame Street' in 1969, and the diversity I see on the show today is the norm to me. I think that if you can get kids early enough, it becomes the norm.

LGK: You know, there's this great Margaret Meade quote: 'Never believe that a small group of people can't change the world for in fact that's all who ever has.' I hope that's right. I think that's right. You know, we have to be hopeful, and yes, it's hard work, and yes, it's pushing the rock up the hill, and yes, it's pushing against multi-generational change, but if we don't try, nothing is ever going to change.

LHC: Sesame is never going to do it all on its own, that's for sure. Watching a half-hour of 'Sesame Street' every day is never going to change someone completely, but hopefully it can do something, it can initiate some thought.

RC: Well, obviously they're doing something right by having sustained all these years. What do you think that right thing is?

LHC: That from day one they have considered themselves an experiment and that they are willing to adapt, mold, and be pliable to different situations, which is why they're so adaptable in so many different countries. If they feel that certain children are changing or see things a little bit differently in one country than they do in another, they are willing to change their program while still honoring their mission, which is to help children reach their highest potential.

LGK: And also, you know what? They're really entertaining. They're really, really funny and smart. It doesn't matter how great your curriculum is; if you're not entertaining, kids aren't going to watch.

RC: Right. I wasn't at Sundance this year, but I understand that it was very well received. How do you feel about that response, and what do you think it says about independent film and the film community and what can be done insofar as social change?

LGK: We had a screening at midnight—I think everybody gets a midnight screening—but we had a screening at midnight, which was sold out, and there were 40 people on the wait list to get in. And after the film, at 2 o'clock in the morning, there were 40 more people who stayed for the Q&A. So we were blown away. I mean, we always believed that this film could have a very wide audience because whether you watched it as a kid, you watched it with your kids, or with your grandkids, everybody has some type of recognition and connection and curiosity about 'Sesame Street.' And so we think the joyful response at Sundance shows that the film can do a couple of things: It can show the power of film to make an impact, and it can open people's eyes to the fact that the world is getting smaller, that we're all a part of it, and that kids around the world are really the same. ★

For more information about The World According to Sesame Street, please see www.participantproductions.com.

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Moving Images

The best docs do more than educate—
they inspire real change

BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004) was an unqualified hit. The documentary, which followed Spurlock as he ate nothing but McDonalds for 30 days and interviewed a string of experts on the rapidly worsening American obesity epidemic, was nominated for an Oscar. It won at Sundance and at countless other festivals. It earned glowing reviews and a wide theatrical release—still a rarity for documentaries. It became the sixth highest grossing documentary in history, and it even made Spurlock some money—almost miraculous for a documentarian.

But it was at an early community screening in Dallas that Spurlock realized his film might be more than a personal success. The movie was shown in a theater alongside *Troy* and *Van Helsing*, not a typical venue for nonfiction fare, and the audience for *Super Size Me* was filled with adolescents and teenagers. "These kids thought it was hilarious. They were laughing and having a really good time," says Spurlock. "That's when I realized the power of the film."

Spurlock set out to make a film about a looming social crisis—obe-

sity—and chose an idiosyncratic personal odyssey as his form. He hoped his project would be a piece of informative entertainment, one that would make audiences laugh while it taught them something. He never imagined it would be a catalyst for verifiable change.

After seeing *Super Size Me*, kids began to boycott unhealthy school lunch programs. Spurlock rushed an educational version of *Super Size Me* into production—minus a few four-letter words and one scene in which his girlfriend, Alex, discusses the deleterious effects his new diet had on their sex life—and sent the film out to anyone who expressed interest. School boards requested the film for screenings, and state politicians showed it to their colleagues in legislatures across the country. School soft drink service and junk-food vending machines were banned in some districts. People stopped Spurlock on the street to tell him that his film changed the way their family ate, that they moved more now, that they'd lost weight and fended off impending diabetes or heart failure.

After years of talking up the power of moving images to change people's minds, Spurlock found himself at the helm of a film that had actu-



Occupation: Dreamland addresses the issue of American soldiers being encouraged to reenlist in Iraq



Santino says goodbye in *The Lost Boys of Sudan* (above); *Super Size Me*'s Spurlock weighs in

ally spurred people to action. He could now point to his own movie as proof that, "film and TV truly are the key to unlocking many of society's problems."

Like Spurlock, many documentary filmmakers are driven by social crises. They gravitate to stories that they hope will get to the heart of a political problem or shed light on a community in trouble. But how many of them make any kind of difference? And how can that social effect be measured? And beyond a good story well told, what ingredients ensure that a film makes an impact on the group or issue that it portrays?

Lost Boys of Sudan is a very different kind of documentary than *Super Size Me*—in tone, ambition, and ultimately reach—but it is in many ways a model for social issue filmmakers. Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk's film tells the story of two young Sudanese refugees relocated to Texas by the U.S. State Department. The film begins in northern Kenya, where the boys lived in refugee camps after having fled persecution in Sudan. *Lost Boys* charts their move to the U.S., their trials finding work, their difficulty navigating a cultural landscape complete-

ly different from their own, and ultimately the almost insurmountable challenges they faced in getting the college education they wanted so badly.

The film is shot in a cinema verité style; in contrast to Spurlock, Shenk and Mylan never include themselves in the drama. But their desire to have an impact on the fate of Sudanese refugees in the U.S. was present from the film's conception. "The hardest part [of filming] was not being able to be the friends that these boys really needed," says Mylan. "So the moral deal that Jon and I made was that if we honestly told this story, it would be an eye-opener to Americans about how tough it is to come to this country and make your way. That would be how we would help."

Lost Boys was distributed theatrically for 8 months in 50 cities and then premiered on PBS as part of the "P.O.V." documentary series. Mylan and Shenk partnered with P.O.V. to create a stand-alone website, an educational version of the film, and extensive teaching guides. Their plan was to make information and resources available to people who were touched by any aspect of the movie, from its two charismat-



Paula and Shelby Knox, of *The Education of Shelby Knox*

ic protagonists, Peter and Santino, to the entire continent of Africa.

"We knew we needed to help the main characters of our film, the larger group of lost boys, refugees across the country, and the people of Sudan. It was daunting, but we couldn't *not* do any of that," says Mylan. "There are people who see Peter and Santino and don't see beyond that. And then there are those people who see the connection to Albanian refugees in their community or to the Darfur crisis, and that's great."

Mylan and Shenk have organized 1,000 community events and there have been many more educational and community screenings of their film, many of which served as fundraisers for refugee groups like Care and Doctors Without Borders.

The filmmakers helped local organizations find lost boys or other immigrants who would be part of panel discussions after screenings. A private funder interested in refugee issues provided outreach funding, allowing them to fly to screenings, like the one organized by the Commonwealth Catholic Charities of Richmond, VA, which resettled 47 lost boys in the area. At the screening, a family offered to take in a Sudanese woman and her toddler; others signed up to volunteer and mentor new immigrants. Other local panelists found support from audience members, and sponsors said their presence was enormously valuable. "That pairing [of the film and the panel discussion] was so crucial for our audience," says Darcie Olson, who used *Lost Boys of Sudan* to recruit volunteers for the Amnesty International effort surrounding the Darfur crisis. "Meeting the boys really helped them to see the scope of the crisis. And that's crucial in making sure people stay involved."

Seeing the film in a theater or meeting a lost boy at a Q&A weren't strictly necessary for eliciting a reaction; the film reached many thousands who saw it on PBS, which, despite a fuddy duddy (or hopelessly elitist, depending on who you ask) image, still reaches almost every American household with a television. John Kah, a 24-year-old air force

veteran who usually worked nights, found himself home one evening and unable to sleep. He caught *Lost Boys* on TV and was deeply moved.

"No one was helping these young men adjust and succeed in their new country, and I was troubled," says Kah. "It seems to me that the time wasted by Americans watching television or sleeping in on Saturday mornings could be donated to these more than deserving young men."

He emailed Mylan and Shenk, who put him in touch with a refugee agency near his home in Spokane, WA. He and his wife have volunteered with that group ever since. The Kahs began with a family of Cuban refugees, helping them to enroll their children in school and to pass driving tests. Three lost boys from refugee camps in Kenya soon moved into their spare bedroom. Kah remembered from the film how important new winter clothes could be, so he purchased shoes and jackets for the young men after they arrived. He eventually taught each to drive, determined to help them achieve independence in their new lives.

Kah now believes in the power of documentary film. "They create awareness of social issues and illustrate ways in which normal individuals can remedy these issues," he says. A film, he notes, is a ready-made source of information, organized around a compelling narrative. "If a film hadn't been made, someone who wished to inform others or themselves [about an issue] would have to do so much work and research."

Mylan finds this kind of response particularly gratifying. Though she's grateful for all the money that's been raised and the volunteers recruited, she hopes that, above all, *Lost Boys of Sudan* will help to open up the debate about immigration in America. "The great intangible is the way you make people think in a different way," she says.

(In addition to opened minds, Mylan and Shenk happily witnessed tangible rewards for the boys to whom they had grown so close. As a result of the film, Peter was offered a full scholarship at Green Mountain College in Vermont, and Santino found a sponsor who paid his tuition at DeAnza Community College in San Jose, CA. Altogether, more than \$500,000 was raised at screenings for an education fund for lost boys.)

For filmmakers like Mylan and Shenk who have a limited budget and expansive ambitions for the scope of their film, the support of an organization like P.O.V. is crucial. With almost 20 years of experience producing and broadcasting small independent documentaries, P.O.V. not only ensures that a film is seen on television, but that it will become a resource for community organizers and activists. They continue to work with each of the 15 to 20 films they sponsor each year for four to five years after. "We platform all of our films for ongoing use," says Cara Mertes, P.O.V.'s executive director.

They also provide a crucial service in managing expectations. "Of course we all want congress to pass a law the next day on whatever issue we feel is pressing," says Mertes, "but we also know we can see change working incrementally. We have individuals who give \$100 after seeing a film or offer to buy a family's groceries. That can be as important as sparking a congressional discussion about immigration policy."

P.O.V. has also learned that filmmakers often make poor advocates; they need to partner with community groups and activists in order to make sure their film finds its audience. Robert West, whose North Carolina-based organization, Working Films, advises filmmakers on social issue marketing and outreach programs, agrees.

"Find the savviest and smartest allies on the issue covered by your film and invite them into your distribution plans early on," he says.



Once in the U.S., Peter found a job working at Wal-Mart

"Invite them to see how the film might serve the needs of their effort and their interest group. Partnerships between filmmakers and allies will get constituents to turn out for screenings, and then harness that audience for local actions tied to larger national efforts. The actions offered for audiences after a screening should not be ephemeral or rhetorical, but sharply strategic."

Community organizers, says West, are typically much better prepared than filmmakers to give nitty gritty advice. "[Documentary filmmakers] don't usually have that perfect way to tap people in to the energy when the credits roll and the lights go up," he says.

"It's not enough to move people," agrees Mylan. "You have to say, 'Here's what you can do.'"

Filmmakers are also occasionally guilty of seeing their film as the main attraction and using community organizations and activists as extensions of their marketing plan. That would be a serious mistake if their aim is to truly do some good, cautions West. "Filmmakers must be prepared not just to say 'How can grassroots activism help my film?' but 'How can my movie help the movement?'" he says.

Many filmmakers discover that outreach begins long before the first screenings. "It begins when you start your research," says filmmaker Marion Lipschutz, a veteran of many documentaries whose most recent film, *The Education of Shelby Knox*, about a teenage sex-education activist in Lubbock, TX, was a P.O.V. production. "We made copious notes, and we stayed in the loop with all those people as we were filming. We figured out which groups were good, which ones were full of shit, which journalists would be interested."

Many filmmakers report that the more targeted the outreach, the more useful their film can be. *Twist of Faith*, a film about the abuse suffered by an Ohio man at the hands of a Catholic priest, which aired on HBO in 2005, was used to influence several state legislatures deliberating whether to extend the statute of limitations on childhood abuse cases. *Twist of Faith's* director Kirby Dick worked with victims' groups to make copies of his film available to legislators and lobbyists. "The film really helped these influential people understand why these experiences stayed with victims for their whole life, why they couldn't come forward until much later to confront their abusers," he says.

Technology is perhaps the most potent ally any filmmaker has in his or her efforts to make a difference. Without an internet site, a casual viewer's piqued interest would go squandered. Now, it is captured and directed to

local volunteer organizations or to a fundraising effort. "We used to say that the film never ends, but now it's true," says Mertes. "Everything is faster, better, and more effective. That's terribly exciting for our goals. We can reach out nationally and internationally, and we can tap into whole new lists of potential supporters."

It has also, of course, provided new viewers for documentaries. Netflix carries all of P.O.V.'s films, for example, and more than 75,000 have been rented. And many of those viewers follow their sympathy to the websites of *Lost Boys of Sudan* or *The Education of Shelby Knox*.

Digital technology is also being used in new ways that have more in common with scrappy political agitation than old-school grassroots organizing. West reports that he has been working with two young filmmakers, Garrett Scott and Ian Olds, who recently completed a film about a platoon of soldiers in Iraq called *Occupation: Dreamland*. (Scott died suddenly and tragically in March.) One sequence, a particularly powerful episode involving a young man's disgust at being urged to re-enlist rather than go home, where he'll "probably end up living with Momma going to a small community college somewhere," will be uploadable as a six-minute segment on iTunes. West hopes that this excerpt might be useful to organizations spearheading anti-recruitment efforts in high schools and on college campuses where large numbers of students have iPods. For students who might not agree to sit through a 90-minute film, this mini-movie could be particularly compelling. "That's an important six-minute tool that activists wouldn't have had in their hands a few years ago," says West.

Social issue documentaries have been so influential in recent years that they are beginning to attract the attention of for-profit producers, as well as not-for-profit outlets like P.O.V. "Documentaries can make a difference and make money," says Diane Weyermann, executive vice president of documentary production at Participant Productions. Participant, whose website proclaims it is "changing the world one story at a time," is the most notable example of Hollywood's interest in do-gooder efforts. Committed to producing films with a strong message, in 2005 Participant released *Murderball*, *Syriana*, *North Country*, and *Good Night, and Good Luck*. In addition to the usual mainstream promotion campaigns, they organized outreach projects for each of their films and their website lists resources where people can go to find out more information, donate money, or volunteer their services.

"What is crucial about our work is that every film's release, whether fiction or nonfiction, will be accompanied by a social action campaign, because the primary goal is to have a positive effect on social change," says Weyermann.

Some not-for-profit veterans are skeptical of whether a conventional production company can pledge to a program of social advocacy. P.O.V.'s Mertes wonders whether Participant will remain committed to making its films available to organizers cheaply and whether they will continue to support outreach efforts after a few months or even years, when it's time to focus on the next film. "I do think it makes a difference when the bottom line is selling tickets," says Mertes.

Regardless of whether a documentary is better served by a for-profit or not-for-profit company, almost everyone agrees that the best thing a film can do for a cause is to tell a great story. "There are a lot of films that get made about very worthy issues, but they go nowhere because it wasn't successful on all the levels a film has to work on," says Rose Rosenblatt, co-director of *The Education of Shelby Knox*. "They can't be pedantic or didactic. They must be entertaining and large." ★

History in the Making

BY ETHAN ALTER

It sounds more like a chemistry experiment than the premise for a television series: Take ten independent documentary filmmakers celebrated for their bold and uncompromising visions and partner them with the History Channel, a cable network best known for its comfort-food approach to historical programming. The result could either push the boundaries of the television documentary form or blow up in everyone's faces. No one was more aware of the latter possibility than Joe Berlinger, the award-winning documentarian (*Brother's Keeper*, 1992; *Paradise Lost*, 1996) hired to help develop "10 Days that Unexpectedly Changed America" (premiering April 9 at 9 pm/ET), the History Channel's highest-profile 2006 series. "It was a learning and growing experience for everyone," Berlinger remarks diplomatically. "On the one hand, we recruited filmmakers who are used to a lot of creative freedom. On the other hand, this is a network that knows its audience and is trying to strike a balance between allowing for creativity and producing a television series. Were there inevitable bumps along the road? Yes, but overall "10 Days" represents a tremendous collaboration between people accustomed to their independence and a network used to dictating the format of its shows."

The brainchild of History Channel executive Susan Werbe, "10 Days" is an anthology of ten one-hour documentaries, each focusing on a day in American history that helped shape the country's future. But don't expect to see obvious dates like July 4, 1776 (the Declaration of Independence), December 7, 1941 (the bombing of Pearl Harbor), or September 11, 2001 (the World Trade Center attacks). For one thing, those events have already served as the subjects for a number of documentaries, several of which were produced by the History Channel itself. Besides, as Werbe explains, part of the mission statement for this series was to find new subjects that would excite viewers as well as the filmmakers themselves. "From the beginning, we stressed that we didn't want for this to be the ten *most* important days in American history," she says. "The role of the History Channel and this kind of project is not to do a top ten list. That kind of trivializes history."

The History Channel taps the indie world for new recruits



Scopes: The Battle Over America's Soul

After pitching the idea in late 2003, Werbe drew up a broad list of days based on the ideas of her staff as well as suggestions offered by History Channel fans via the network's website. The following summer, she approached Berlinger to be a co-executive producer on the series and to direct one of the episodes. "I knew that he had done a series for Court TV, so he had previous experience working with a cable network. Also, he has a terrific reputation in the independent film community." For his part, the acclaimed director saw the project as a way to challenge both himself as a filmmaker and the History Channel status quo. "One of the first things I said to Susan was that I didn't want every show to feel like the other," he remembers. "I wanted each filmmaker to create a little gem that could stand on its own, but also function as part of a series."

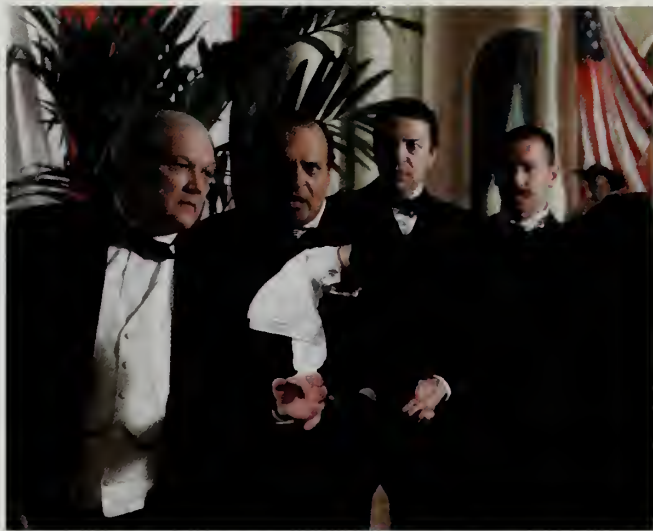
With Berlinger on board, Werbe continued to winnow down the list of days, even inviting a group of prominent historians to New York to lend a hand. In addition to offering suggestions, the historians cautioned against venturing into the recent past, hence the absence of 9/11. "The official reason is that the historians felt we don't have enough perspective on it yet," says Berlinger. "But for me it also felt like a cliché. It's obviously very important, but it's kind of a lost opportunity because it is so well covered."

The series begins in the 17th century and ends with the civil rights movement in 1964. Along the way, it touches on a number of crucial events from the well-known (the Battle of Annetam, the Scopes Trial) to the more obscure (Shay's Rebellion, the Homestead Strike) to the



The filmmakers (clockwise from top left): R.J. Cutler ("Shay's Rebellion: America's First Civil War"); Marco Williams ("Freedom Summer"); Joe Berlinger ("Murder at the Fair: The Assassination of President McKinley"); Kate Davis ("Scopes: The Battle Over American Evolution")





Richard Strobel is McKinley; Nick Maroon, his assassin

unexpected (Elvis' first appearance on Ed Sullivan). In each case, the day acts as a jumping-off point for the examination of larger cultural and political issues. "The day itself is a doorway into a particular period in history," explains Werbe. "They are the trigger points that resulted in change."

Once the historians had had their say, the next step was to recruit nine other filmmakers willing to hop aboard the experiment. As it turned out, almost all of the documentarians whom the producers approached agreed to be part of the series with little hesitation. The final list reads like a Who's Who of independent documentary filmmakers, featuring such names as Bruce Sinofsky (*Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, 2004), Jeffrey Friedman and Rob Epstein (*The Celluloid Closet*, 1995), Rory Kennedy (*American Hollow*, 1999), and Barak Goodman (*Scottsboro: An American Tragedy*, 2000). In Werbe's view, a big part of the draw was the opportunity to produce a fully-funded film that would be heavily marketed and shown to a wide audience—circumstances that are difficult to come by in the independent world. Many of the filmmakers echo her sentiments. "You can't count on these kinds of opportunities," says Kate Davis, who directed the 2001 Sundance favorite, *Southern Comfort* (2001). "I grew artistically and there was another place to show my stuff," adds Michael Epstein (*The Battle Over Citizen Kane*, 1995). "From an independent filmmaking stand-point, that's nothing but good news. Hopefully you're making movies to be seen. And many, many more people will see these films on the History Channel than in a theatrical or even a DVD release."

While the lure of a guaranteed budget and release were difficult to resist, the filmmakers needed to be reassured that they would have a certain degree of creative autonomy. This was where Berlinger's presence proved helpful; the directors knew he would take their concerns seriously. "I would describe my role in the series as a safe harbor," he says. "There were times when the filmmakers came to me wanting to explore certain issues before they went to the network." And while Berlinger admits that he occasionally had to act as a "referee" between parties, overall he characterizes the collaboration as a positive one. It helped that several of the filmmakers already had experience making documentaries for cable television, which made them accustomed to some of the pre-requisites of the format, including a five-act structure that allows for commercial breaks and the use of narration and/or reen-

actments. To ensure everyone was on the same page, Werbe gave a "History Channel 101" lecture before production began, covering some of the basic requirements. "I talked about how pacing should be a little quicker, that music should help drive the drama and to have a little mini-story arc for each act and a subtle tease going into the next act," she says. "The thing I wanted everyone to keep in mind was the particular challenges of premiering something on TV. It's not like the audience is buying a ticket and going into a dark theater. You really have to hold the viewer, because they have so many choices. But aside from that, the creative process was pretty much left up to their discretion."

One place where the directors were forced to compromise was on the subject of their film. While the producers avoided assigning topics, the selection process was akin to a classroom project. The filmmakers were presented with the list of 30 days and then asked to pick their top three choices. While some directors, like Davis, got their first pick, others weren't so fortunate. "My first choice was February 27, 1968, the day Walter Cronkite did a prime time special about the Tet Offensive in Vietnam," says R.J. Cutler (*A Perfect Candidate*, 1996). Instead, at the producers' suggestion, he wound up telling the story of Shay's Rebellion. Likewise, Epstein initially hoped to direct a film about the civil rights movement, but agreed to cover the Civil War via Antietam. Perhaps the filmmaker tasked with the most difficult assignment was James Moll (*The Last Days*, 1998), who signed onto the project hoping to tackle a "more contemporary" subject only to end up traveling back to 1637 to depict the slaughter of the Pequot tribe by European settlers. "It was a bit of an unscientific process," Berlinger says about divvying up the days. "In some instances people came back to us with a first choice and it got matched, sometimes it was a third choice, and sometimes it wasn't one of their choices at all. In the end, we just made sure that everyone was happy with what their selection was." This included Berlinger himself, who thoughtfully waited for all the other filmmakers to pick their days before choosing from the leftovers. He ended up directing a film about the assassination of William McKinley, a subject that he admits he wasn't particularly interested in at first. "It was only when I got into it that I realized there were some great storytelling opportunities. I'm now glad that I ended up doing it because I learned a lot and stretched my artistic muscles at the same time."

Like Berlinger, all of the directors involved found themselves flexing their creative muscles in order to produce movies that stayed true to their artistic visions while also conforming to the broad outlines of the History Channel's own brand of documentary filmmaking. Moll, for example, says that he generally doesn't use narration in his films but agreed to employ a narrator to "keep in style" with the network. (Though he still put his own stamp on the device; the narrator was one of the historians who appears in on-camera interview segments.) By far the most controversial aesthetic question was whether or not to include reenactments. While Werbe didn't require the filmmakers to shoot this sort of material, she did ask them to keep an open mind. "Our viewers are used to reenactments and, if you go back far enough, there is a point of no return. Obviously there's no substitute for real archival material. But if you are in that pre-photographic era of history or if there are only a few photos available, reenactments are a viable option." Despite Werbe's points in favor of reenactments, many of the filmmakers remained skeptical. "I, by and large, hate recreations," Epstein

says simply. Cutler goes one step further: "I simply don't understand them. I don't know why all these people are putting on costumes and traipsing about pretending they're fighting in the Revolution. I guess audiences respond to them, but to me, as a storyteller, they seem silly."

It goes without saying then that these were two of the four directors who opted against including reenactments. Instead, Epstein recreated the battle of Antietam by shooting a number of still photographs in the style of celebrated Civil War photographer Mathew Brady and then manipulated them in post-production to suggest movement. Cutler, meanwhile, turned Shay's Rebellion into a cartoon—literally—with the help of Oscar-nominated animator Bill Plympton. "I wanted to stimulate the viewer's imagination in a more impressionistic way," he explains. "That's why I decided to use animation. I actually think you're going to see more and more documentaries doing it—it's an interesting option." While Culter says that he didn't encounter any resistance when he pitched the idea to the network, Werbe admits that his proposal initially caught her off guard. "I was scared, no question about it," she says candidly. "And I had to do a little in-house sales job. But that was the point of this series: to have these filmmakers experiment and come up with something we might not otherwise have done."

For every Epstein or Cutler, there was a Berlinger or Moll, who decided to shoot reenactments despite their initial reservations. "In my case, reenactments made sense—there obviously weren't any cameras in 1637," jokes Moll, adding that he actually came to enjoy the process by the end of the shoot. Berlinger experienced a similar change of heart. "I felt, if I was going to do something like this, I wanted to push recreations to the max. I really wanted to bring some cinematic technique to it and push the envelope a little bit." The finished film features a minute-by-minute recreation of McKinley's assassination, which features such camera tricks as slow-motion, freeze frames, and elaborate dolly shots. "I had a lot of fun doing this show," he says now. "I used to have a very rigid idea of what constitutes documentary, and it was interesting to break those shackles a bit." Davis also made creative use of reenactments in her documentary about the Scopes Trial. She and her co-director David Heilbroner traveled to Dayton, Ohio and filmed the town's annual recreation of the trial, complete with locals playing the roles of Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan. "It was more of a verité approach," says Davis. "Here's a town that just can't get over this trial. They're really living it, and that's the documentary element of this reenactment. For us, it was metaphoric of the country; we're still arguing bitterly over these ideas."

The debate over reenactments is part of a wider question about the role of television in historical filmmaking. At a time when the majority of theatrical documentaries focus on contemporary issues, places like the History Channel or PBS become the only venue for films about the past. But because the survival of a network like the History Channel depends on appealing to the widest possible audience, many of their productions rely on devices—such as reenactments—that arguably simplify history. "There is a category of TV documentaries that are made at a very basic level for a broad audience," says David Greenberg,



Antietam was the bloodiest day of fighting in American history

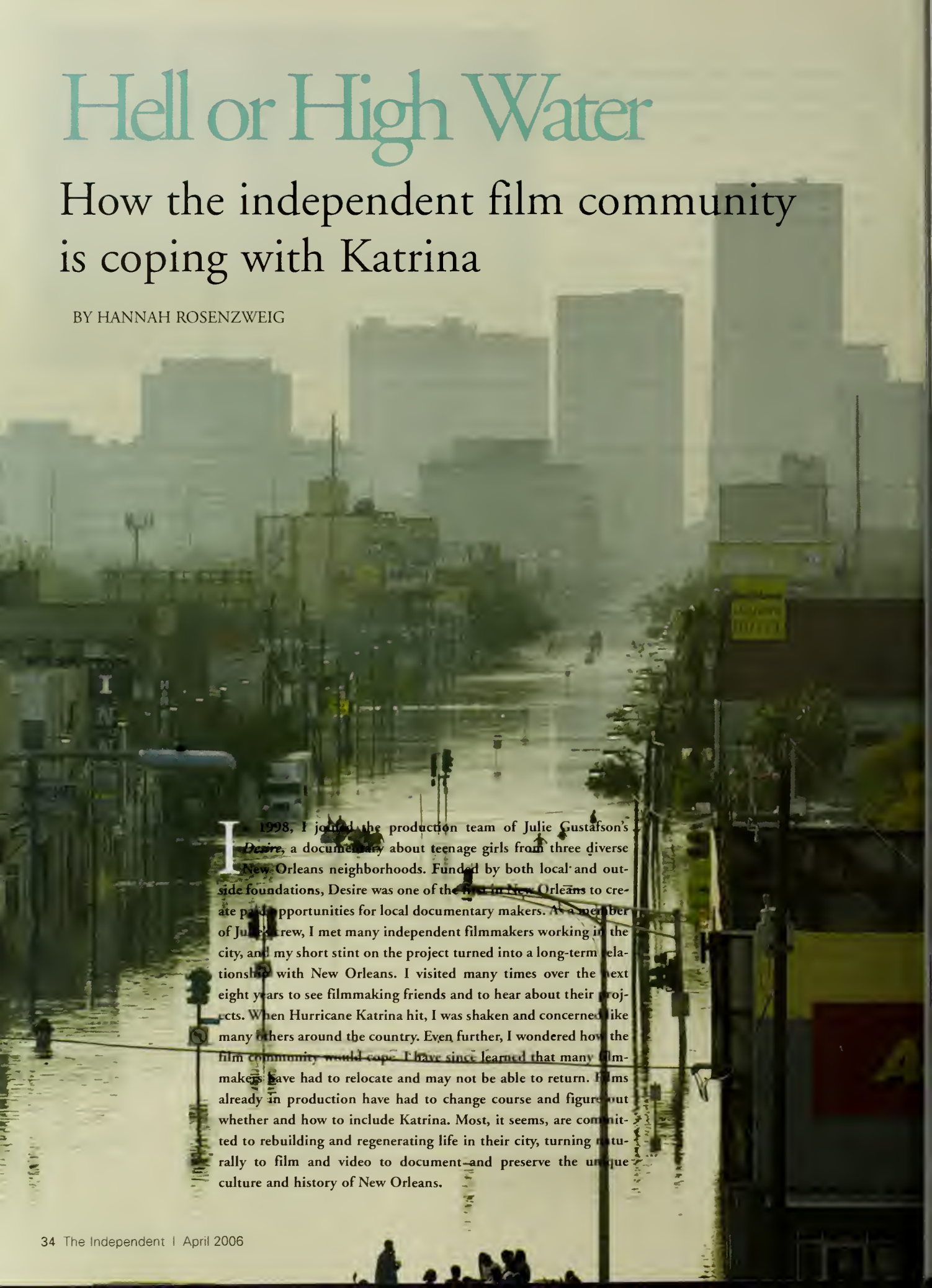
an assistant professor of journalism and media studies at Rutgers University. "They are designed to catch someone on the couch that evening or afternoon rather than having a more ambitious agenda that includes arguing about or providing different interpretations of historical events." There's also the thorny issue of who gets to tell the story of the past. "In a book you can feature many viewpoints," Greenberg explains. "But in a documentary—particularly one made for television—you really only have time to feature a few talking heads. And sometimes a few people will get special prominence, and they may or may not be the most reliable sources, just the people who work well on TV." And, of course, the historical record can be greatly affected by who is behind the camera. All of the "10 Days" filmmakers are perfectly aware that another director would have treated the same material in an entirely different way. In fact, Marco Williams, who directed the civil rights-themed episode "Freedom Summer," expresses some regret that his subject wasn't tackled by a white filmmaker. "My feeling is that the civil rights movement was not a Black American experience—it was an American experience. I think a white filmmaker would have seen a number of other things to highlight in the same way that I would have a very different approach to an episode about Elvis."

Aesthetic debates aside, all of the filmmakers involved with "10 Days" ultimately agree that the series was as educational for them as they hope it will be for viewers. "It was a very positive experiment with a very positive outcome," Berlinger says. "There were inevitable growing pains as everyone learned to speak the same language, but at the end of the day the network did a great job giving the directors as much creative freedom as was practical." Werbe also stresses that the collaboration between the two camps is what makes the series noteworthy. "This says to independent filmmakers that the History Channel is a place where you can be comfortable." In fact, a number of the filmmakers already have other television projects lined up (albeit on other channels) and would return if the network decided to do another installment of "10 Days." "I wouldn't have made 'Antietam' unless someone knocked on my door, but I'm glad I went through the experience of making it," says Epstein. "It was a great opportunity, and I hope there are more." ★

Hell or High Water

How the independent film community is coping with Katrina

BY HANNAH ROSENZWEIG



I n 1998, I joined the production team of Julie Gustafson's *Desire*, a documentary about teenage girls from three diverse New Orleans neighborhoods. Funded by both local and outside foundations, *Desire* was one of the first in New Orleans to create paid opportunities for local documentary makers. As a member of Julie's crew, I met many independent filmmakers working in the city, and my short stint on the project turned into a long-term relationship with New Orleans. I visited many times over the next eight years to see filmmaking friends and to hear about their projects. When Hurricane Katrina hit, I was shaken and concerned like many others around the country. Even further, I wondered how the film community would cope. I have since learned that many filmmakers have had to relocate and may not be able to return. Films already in production have had to change course and figure out whether and how to include Katrina. Most, it seems, are committed to rebuilding and regenerating life in their city, turning naturally to film and video to document and preserve the unique culture and history of New Orleans.



At left: The view down Tulane Avenue from the interstate overpass shows the true extent of the flooding. Right: *The Faubourg Tremé* crew films Lenwood Sloan and Karen Kaia Livers of the Living History Project.

Before the Storm

Independent filmmakers in New Orleans have characterized the pre-Katrina film community as tiny, chronically under-funded, and somewhat isolated. "There just isn't the tax base to give money to film, to artists of any kind," says Tim Watson, an editor, producer, and co-founder of Ariel Montage, a production company in uptown New Orleans. Although state agencies occasionally gave out small grants, most financing for independent film in New Orleans came from foundations and donors outside of Louisiana. Known for its music and food, the city simply lacked the civic support—independent movie theaters, private donors, film organizations—found in larger film hubs like New York or San Francisco.

In spite of this, the film industry in New Orleans has grown steadily since the early '90s. In the last decade, Louisiana attracted Hollywood producers with tax incentives for in-state shooting, creating employment opportunities and access to media professionals, and putting New Orleans on the national film radar. Many independent filmmakers, enticed by the rich culture and low cost of living, moved to New Orleans.

One of the most attractive qualities of the community has been its support system. Rebecca Snedeker was able to shoot *By Invitation Only*, about private Mardi Gras balls where young white women are presented as debutantes and queens in mock-royal courts, by bartering production services with local filmmakers. The film was later funded by ITVS and the National Endowment for the Arts and will screen as part of the "Class in America" series at this year's Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. One film's national recognition is often cause for another's celebration because as filmmaker Dawn Logsdon puts it, "If someone gets funding, it elevates everyone." Snedeker adds, "We can all sink or swim. The more good things we all make, the more we might be able to be recognized as a community or to receive national funding."

After Katrina

It's been seven months now since Katrina, and everyone in New Orleans is still struggling to put their lives back together and simultaneously attempt to make sense of the devastation in their city. Eighty percent of the city was flooded. More than 300,000 homes were damaged. Although some have been able to return to their homes, many are still unable and have chosen to relocate permanently.

Neil Alexander, a photographer and filmmaker, started his film *An Eye in the Storm* just before Katrina hit. During the days that followed he often felt he was the only person left in the city, an experience that deepened his sense of responsibility to document the aftermath. One that led him to elect not to evacuate. His family home sits two blocks from the convention center where thousands of people lived in chaotic conditions without food, water, or sanitation for days after the storm. Alexander describes *Eye in the Storm* as the "voice and eyes for everybody that left; the voice for those that ended up staying" and hopes that it's helped alert people to the devastation. During shooting, Alexander filmed a man pushing a shopping cart full of baby supplies—diapers, formula, dehydration fluid—for miles to the convention center, proof that supplies *could* get to the center—at a time when FEMA and Homeland Security said geography prevented access to the neighborhood—and that there were ordinary people risking their lives to transport them. Geraldo Rivera ran this clip a few days after the storm. It served as a counterpoint to the images of looting and mayhem consuming mainstream media.

Other filmmakers have chosen to focus on the way the aftermath has affected local culture. Royce Osborn, a native New Orleanian who directed *All on a Mardi Gras Day* about black carnival traditions, was working as a hotel doorman (testament to the harsh economics of filmmaking) when the hurricane struck. After five days in the floods, he managed to evacuate first to Houston and then to Los Angeles.



Royce Osborn (right), *Walking to New Orleans*, shakes his bones on Claiborne Avenue during Mardi Gras, 2005.



During Mardi Gras, Big Chief Victor Harris from *Bury the Hatchet* takes to the streets in elaborate costume.

where he went on the "Tavis Smiley Show" to share his experience. Soon after, he received a call from National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) asking if he would make a piece about Katrina. He returned to his Gentilly neighborhood, one of only two people on his block, and made *Walking to New Orleans*, a personal look at the cultural traditions and institutions that have been affected by "this thing," as he calls it. Osborn's film, funded in part by ITVS, became part of NBPC's multimedia "Katrina Project," which covers the aftermath through the lens of the people most affected by it.

Those documentary filmmakers with films in production before Katrina hit had to get their projects (tapes, drives, equipment), their families, and themselves to safety when hurricane warnings began to circulate last August. Days or weeks later, several journeyed back to find or follow their subjects. For four years, Aaron Walker had been filming three Mardi Gras Indian chiefs for *Bury the Hatchet*. Before the storm he had been promised a grant by the Louisiana Division of the Arts, which would have allowed him to finish shooting. But after Katrina, most of the funds earmarked for individual media artists were frozen, leaving him with no money and the additional costs of finding the now-displaced chiefs and bringing them back to New Orleans to boot. He chose to spend his personal FEMA funds (emergency money

given to each household after Katrina) on these trips.

Logsdon and her production partner, writer Lolis Eric Elie, faced a similar change of course while making *Faubourg Tremé*, a historical documentary about the Tremé neighborhood told using the stories of present day residents. All of Logsdon's characters were affected by the storm and following them back to their flooded homes was "really hard and really sad," she says. "Suddenly I'm here with these people going through all of this, it was heartbreaking. We're taking the piece from an hour to an hour and a half to include what's happened in Tremé since Katrina."

Many New Orleans filmmakers have expressed what Alexander calls an emotional, rather than a cerebral, "pull" to their city. After many years in LA and one in New York, Osborn who'd moved back to New Orleans in 1997 says, "nothing ever felt right except for here." Filmmaker Jeremy Campbell agrees, explaining that he believes in Marie Leveaux's famous spell on New Orleans: "Anybody who truly loved it here, when they tried to leave, would be seduced back." After Katrina, Campbell felt "it was time for me to stand up and do something for my city, and what I could offer was a film." *Hexing the Hurricane*, which documents several people including actor/comedian Harry Anderson and journalist Chris Rose, is about the resilient spirit of New Orleanians in the months after the storm, and is Campbell's attempt to "cover the heart" of the city.

It's only been in the last few months that independent filmmakers have started screening Katrina footage. New Orleans-based cinematographer William Sabourin's short *Old Orleans*, featuring vivid shots of people moving through the flood on foot or in boats, as well as the looting of neighborhood stores, recently screened at the Zeitgeist Multi-disciplinary Arts Center, one of only a few venues that screen independent films in New Orleans. Osborne, who also shared clips from *Walking to New Orleans* that evening, was heartened by the response: "I think people are really interested in seeing local filmmakers work on this because they've been inundated with seeing TV news coverage, you know, seeing the same kind of shots over and over. When they see this stuff, they recognize the city because they are seeing it through the eyes of somebody who lives here and knows the neighborhoods."

The Future

With resources and opportunities diminished, and neighborhoods empty of basic necessities, New Orleans' documentary film community is significantly smaller than it was just one year ago, and, unfortunately, the conditions in New Orleans are still such that the city will likely continue to lose important artists to other parts of the country. Logsdon and her crew have decided to edit *Faubourg Tremé* in Berkeley, CA. And they're still not sure if they will ever return, says Logsdon. Though, she explains, the distance has given her perspective allowing her to reflect on Katrina and to incorporate it into her project in a meaningful way. Francis James, *Receiving the Gift*, grew up in New Orleans and had been part of the film community for years. After the storm, his wife lost her job as a public school teacher, and he relocated his family to Louisville, KY. "There is the unmarried, unfamilied filmmaker and then there is the person who has got a family and a household that had to be part of the calculation," he says.



A chain reaction creates a worst case scenario as fire consumes several 19th century homes.

After Katrina, Snedeker lived and edited *By Invitation Only* in Austin, Texas. In December, she decided to move back to New Orleans. "I wasn't sure I'd be able to work well [in New Orleans.] I knew I needed to finish the film, and that was number one. I kept hearing stories about it just being so hard, people weren't getting any kind of consistent electricity ... there were very basic questions like: Would the computer go off all the time?" But once she arrived, she knew she had made the right decision: "I was going over the Mississippi River Bridge, and I started feeling better. On that day I decided I'm staying home, and I was totally relieved to be here."

Gustafson is also back rebuilding her home, though she lost her job as a video teacher and isn't sure if she'll be able to stay long term. "We don't know if the levees will hold. There have been some improvements this year, but what if this would happen again? That is hanging over everyone."

Another devastating loss to the film community was the suicide of Stevenson J. Palfi, a well-known, Guggenheim Award-winning documentarian, who took his own life three months after Katrina damaged most of his property and work. His film *Piano Players Rarely Ever Play Together* chronicled the lives of three New Orleans jazzmen. Palfi "was known as the person bringing this music to the rest of the world. He was able to capture (the musicians) and immortalize them. He had

such an insight into this music. It's very tragic," says Walker, a friend and collaborator.

Whether or not the federal government helps rebuild the city, more and more filmmakers are coming on board to keep New Orleans in the spotlight. This year's Full Frame festival will include a special program called "Southern Sidebar," documentaries from the Gulf. Spike Lee is producing a documentary about how race and politics collided after Katrina which will air on HBO near the one-year anniversary of the storm. "American Experience" has commissioned Stephen Ives, founder of Insignia Films in New York, to direct a two-hour film about the history of New Orleans. New York-based filmmakers Carl Deal and Amir Bar-Lev are co-directing *Trouble the Waters* about two New Orleanians who became unlikely heroes during the storm. A.M. Peters has just directed *If Ever I Cease To Love*, which explores post-Katrina New Orleans. Hong Kong director Wong Kar Wai is planning a narrative feature about the human tragedy that unfolded in the wake of Katrina. And there is more to come: local filmmakers say they have recently spotted production crews from Japan, Germany and other countries shooting in their city. If they have anything to say about it, the filmmaking community as a whole will keep alive this hugely influential portion of US culture and history by continuing to tell New Orleans' stories. ★

How Far We've Come

ITVS' 15th anniversary is the perfect opportunity to look back even as it looks ahead

From "The Farmer's Wife"



In 1964 violence erupted in two predominantly black neighborhoods in Rochester, New York. The three-night riot that followed became a significant event in the civil rights era and is the subject of *July '64*, an ITVS film.

BY KYLE MINOR

In 1988, 19-year-old Joanna Katz and her friend were abducted at gunpoint by five men who took turns raping, beating, and torturing them. Joanna managed to escape and later testified in the trials that led to the sentencing of all five men to 30 to 35 years in prison.

"But that was not the end of it," says PBS "Independent Lens" series producer Lois Vossen. "Every time one of the five men came up for parole, Katz had to drive five hours to the parole hearings to tell her story again. This would happen five times every year."

Hers was the kind of story that required the singular, sustained attention that a television news program cannot offer. Katz turned to local television news producer-turned-documentarian Liz Oakley, allowing her to document seven years of frustration over having been forced to relive the trauma again and again in order to keep her assailants behind bars.



And Oakley then turned to the Independent Television Service (ITVS) for the funding that allowed her to complete *Sentencing the Victim*. The documentary aired nationally in 2004 on “Independent Lens”, a platform for independents created by ITVS in partnership with PBS.

Four months later, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford signed Bill S.935, designed to ease the burden of the parole process on crime victims, and similar legislation is currently being undertaken in several other states.

“That was a real validation of our mission,” says ITVS director of programming Claire Aguilar. “It was a case of a voice that was not being heard and all that was needed was a platform.”

After intense lobbying by independent media groups, including AIVE, ITVS, which celebrates its 15th anniversary this year, was established by Congress in the Public Telecommunications Act of 1988 and it wrote its first checks to independent filmmakers in 1991. Its mandate was “to expand the diversity and innovativeness of programming available to public broadcasting.”

There was an early tension between ITVS and many in the independent film community who felt that ITVS took what the *Village Voice* once called “an adversarial and patronizing stance toward producers.” The conflict centered around a rigid standard contract that gave ITVS ultimate control over so many aspects of production and distribution, one that *Taken for a Ride* director Jim Klein told the *Voice*, “would have made independents independent in name only.”

The tension was due in part to the three occasionally conflicting constituencies ITVS was forced to serve by congressional mandate: independent filmmakers, public television, and the viewing public.

“A lot of independents knew that they were the force behind the founding of ITVS,” Aguilar says, “so they felt a real sense of ownership. That’s good, and that’s how it should be.”

Under the leadership of the late Jim Yee, who became ITVS president in 1993, the relationship between ITVS and many in the independent film community was eased, and the organization began to forge stronger bonds with local public television stations as well as with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which provides the lion’s share of ITVS’s annual budget.

A demonstrable turning point was the 1997 airing of David Sutherland’s “The Farmer’s Wife,” a three-part, ITVS-funded series that ran on “Frontline” was watched by 18 million viewers. According to Sutherland, ITVS not only avoided imposing any editorial constraints upon him, but actually helped to guarantee “my producer’s independence and editorial control in my co-production arrangement with ‘Frontline,’ which was very important to me.”

Sutherland says that ITVS also funded \$100,000 worth of outreach above the film’s original budget to help alert religious organizations and groups like Farm Aid about the airing. And ITVS employees even helped personally in ways Sutherland never expected. “Lois Vossen had actually come from a family farm,” he said, “and many times was able to calm Juanita [the farmer’s wife of the title] down when the film got closer to broadcast, and she and her family became more nervous.”

The success of “The Farmer’s Wife” and subsequent ITVS-funded “Frontline” and “P.O.V.” programs led to a further strengthening of ties with PBS—“We went from being an orphan child to being a supplier of content,” says Aguilar—and in 2002 ITVS landed its own regular distribution outlet with “Independent Lens,” a 29-week anthology series that covers “the whole spectrum of independent filmmaking—innovative documentaries, dramas, shorts, and animated works united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unwavering vision of their independent producers.”

ITVS president Sally Jo Fifer explains it like this: “In 2002, we approached PBS about ‘Independent Lens’ and said, ‘Look, independent has been your brand for a long time, and we at public television are losing ground to the Sundance Channel, the Independent Film Channel. Audiences are clamoring for this thing. Let’s take this series to the hard feed, and along with our friends at ‘P.O.V.,’ we’ll meet their needs here, on public television.’ And, to their credit, they agreed to do it.”

The series has received rave reviews, both from viewers and from the filmmakers who have been associated with it.

Producer Chris Christopher’s *July ’64*, which documents the Rochester race riots of 1964, was aired in February on “Independent Lens.”



In ITVS' "Foto-Novela" series, fantastic elements from the Mexican and Latin American comic book tradition are combined with everyday reality and a hint of magical realism.

Christopher says he and partner Carvin Eison were very pleased with the support they received from ITVS and the "Independent Lens" staff. "They are very clear that they want you to succeed, and their involvement extends far beyond financial support. Their feedback throughout the editing process was insightful, respectful, and clear. Everyone made us feel as if *July '64* was their number one priority. This is certainly a very special skill considering how many producers they work with."

In 1997, the FCC assigned digital spectrum to broadcasters, sending a clear signal that the analog to digital revolution in television would happen sooner rather than later. And when a 2003 deadline was set for public television stations to begin Digital Television (DTV) broadcasting is was clear that public television was meant to lead rather than follow commercial broadcasters into the new digital age.

The new service has created a massive need for new programming, and, as Vossen says, "Whenever there is a new platform, we try to carve out a place for it."

The first ITVS/DTV initiative was an hour-long segment on *Town Square*, a nightly four-hour block of news and information programming.

Fifer says the organization plans to be aggressive about the challenges posed by new media outlets. "The idea is to be responsive to the growing, changing marketplace," she says, "and not to just manage those changes. We want to drive those changes."

One of those changes is the challenge (and opportunity) raised by the growing global market for independent documentary films. Through its ITVS International arm and the International Media Development Fund, independent filmmakers from outside the United States are offered funding and help in connecting with American audiences.

ITVS is getting into the international distribution business too, offering resources to under-funded and programming-hungry public television stations in countries that would not otherwise have access to independent American voices.

The first new series in this initiative, *True Stories: Life in the USA*, hosted by Benicio del Toro, has already been made available in several international markets. The idea, according to Vossen, is to offer international viewers a picture of the United States quite different from the one offered by reruns of commercial television series and Hollywood movies.

But the investment in international distribution is a move that might be alarming to independent filmmakers who are already struggling to cobble together the funds to sustain their work, and who rely on the additional funds offered by the international distribution networks that already deliver independently produced content to television markets in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia.

Vossen is quick to alleviate these concerns. "We're not trying to compete with the other international distributors our filmmakers might be working alongside," she says. "We're not trying to compete with the established distributors. We're getting involved in new markets where these programs would not have otherwise been shown, places like Malawi, for example, where there is no money for this kind of programming."

Another challenge posed to television broadcasters of all stripes is the rise of the internet. ITVS was an early adopter of internet-based interactivity strategies. As early as 1996—the year before the debut of the DVD player—it launched www.itvs.org. By 1998, the website offered broadcast schedules, external links to producer-created content,

teachers' guides, producers' resources, and an electronic press room. When *Our House*, a documentary about the children of gay and lesbian parents, aired in 2000, the website hosted its first live chat, allowing viewers to participate in the conversation initiated by the documentary.

This spring, "Independent Lens" is sponsoring its first-ever Online Shorts Festival, featuring short-form films of ten minutes or less in all genres. The winning film will receive a \$2,500 prize and premiere on a PBS broadcast of "Independent Lens," and the 10 runners-up will be published in streaming video on the "Independent Lens" website.

Though ITVS has yet to announce a strategy for addressing the new video streaming and podcasting capabilities offered by the iPod, it is not hard to imagine that the Online Shorts Festival will likely be a proving ground for the new technologies.

The year-long celebration in response to ITVS's 15th anniversary has provided an opportunity for reflection upon what the organization has been and what it will become.

According to "P.O.V."/"American Documentary" executive director Cara Mertes, ITVS's greatest success can be found in its bolstering of independent voices. "'P.O.V.' and ITVS owe their existence to the hard work and vision of the independent producing community in partnership with key funders and other advocates," she says. "Over the years, the two organizations have supported and co-produced a number of outstanding 'P.O.V.' broadcasts. ITVS is one of the few places our producers can get critical resources to realize their projects, and we share a vision of supporting the most compelling independent stories about today's realities."

That success is easy to quantify. ITVS has funded over 600 films since 1991. It has prefigured, survived, and coexisted alongside the documentary and reality TV boom. It has become a force at the Sundance Film Festival, with seven shows premiering in 2004 alone, and one of them, *Brother to Brother*, taking the Special Jury Prize. It has funded independent voices to the tune of \$800 million and helped many of them to find an audience. Through its Diversity Development Fund, it helps minority producers develop promising projects that might otherwise be denied start-up funding. And through "Independent Lens" and partnerships with programs like "P.O.V." and "Frontline," it continues to offer independent voices a regular forum on national broadcast television.

Challenges await. The political climate in Washington, D.C. is growing increasingly hostile to the funding of the arts in general, and public broadcasting specifically. The controversial nature of much of the programming funded by ITVS could make the organization a convenient target. And with the proliferation of new portable digital devices, the future of television itself is in question.

The future? Fifer is optimistic: "Our mission is more resolute than ever—to bring diverse voices to the public, and to use those stories to bring about change. And change happens person by person. What's really unique about the stories we fund is that they ignite groups of people to band together and solve problems in their communities.

"That's what makes public television different from the commercial



Bruce Nugent inspires a gay teenager through memories of the Harlem Renaissance in *Brother to Brother*. Above: From *Alcatraz Is Not an Island*

venue. Independents stick with their story long enough to bring context and depth to the story, and then to enhance that story with action, to bring people together to think about how to solve a problem. That's what leads to solutions. That's why we're still doing this after all these years." ★

CHEAT SHEET : Getting Your Film on Public TV

By Erica Berenstein

Programmers from the major Corporation for Public Broadcasting-funded programs that accept submissions from independent filmmakers offer some tips.

Center for Asian American Media (formerly NAATA), <http://asianamerica.org>. Funding: Open call for projects in production/post-production only. Awards average \$20,000 to \$50,000. Deadline: April 21, 2006. Open Door Completion Fund: Final finishing funds deadline: August 26, 2006. What they're looking for: "We want Asian American stories and the Asian American perspective," says Donald Young, the director of broadcast programming. CAAM doesn't discriminate as long as one of the major creative roles is filled by a person of the represented race or ethnicity. Tips: CAAM is currently interested in content about 9/11, specifically, "looking at how the world has shifted for South Asians and Muslim communities."

Latino Public Broadcasting, www.lpb.org. Funding: Open call. Deadline: TBA. What they're looking for: "Stories that can be told by Latinos or non-Latinos that reflect or give voice to Latino Americans," says Luis Ortiz, LPB's program manager. LPB is primarily looking for documentaries, but the open call is open to all genres. Tips: Ortiz says a common mistake applicants make is failing to read the guidelines and therefore not covering required sections of the proposal, or not being specific enough about details such as target audience. You should tailor your application to each program for which you are applying. Sample proposals can be found at www.lpb.org/sample_proposals.htm. "Voces," a new series of biographies and social issue docs, will premiere on PBS in fall of 2006. Though the first season has already been planned, LPB is looking for submissions for the second season. (They will only accept finished films that fit within PBS content guidelines.)

National Black Programming Consortium, www.nbpc.tv. Funding: Open call. Deadline: June 2, 2006. From \$5,000 to \$80,000 for all stages of production. Very competitive discretionary funding applications are accepted year-round. Completed projects must meet PBS guidelines as stated in the PBS Red Book—the packaging and delivery guidelines for PBS programs (www.pbs.org/producers/redbook/). What they're looking for: Stories about the African American and African diaspora experience. Tip: NBPC is interested in projects that fit into traditional broadcast regulations while embracing new media, such as podcasts or, in the near future, cell phone video distribution.

Native American Public Telecommunications (NAPT), www.nativetelecom.org. Funding: Full project budgets. What they're looking for: Quantity and quality of Native American participation in creative, technical, and advisory works of any genre as well as the finished program's power to illuminate the Native American experience. Tip: NAPT is looking for "a different spin on what we already know" in terms of historical themes, according to Assistant Director Shirley Sneve.

Pacific Islanders in Communications, www.picom.org. Funding: Open Call. Deadline: July 2006. Projects must raise 50 to 80 percent of their funds from other sources. PIC provides funds for R&D, production, and completion. They acquire at least one finished film per year and have a Short Film

Initiative this year. What they're looking for: All genres of film that address the history, culture, and contemporary challenges faced by Pacific Islanders. Hints: PIC has recently focused more on social and politically based programming "because there is a definite need within the system," according to Gus Cobb-Adams, the program associate at PIC. Tip: Unlike ITVS and P.O.V., which would prefer you keep your application spare, PIC wants you to "submit everything you've got" because "the evidence [of] your ability to tell a story through film and video" is what will lead to a successful application.

Independent Lens, www.pbs.org/independentlens. Funding: An acquisition fee for finished films or almost-finished films. Deadline: May 25, 2006. What they're looking for: All genres. Tips: They don't want to see rough cuts, but if the film is almost finished, then they will look at fine cuts for filmmakers who plan to use acquisition fees to finish the film. Lois Vossen, Independent Lens' series producer, says that although "the ills in the world are important" and the many films addressing them "wonderful," Independent Lens tries to acquire one or two films each year that "celebrate life...I don't mean saccharine." Vossen, who used to program shorts at Sundance, encourages animation and shorts, and Independent Lens recently launched an online shorts festival. Also, it's a myth that, if you submit to P.O.V. you should not bother submitting to Independent Lens. It's a different process altogether and each series is looking for different things.

Independent Television Service (ITVS), www.itvs.org. Funding: Two open calls yearly and the LINCOS, Local Independents Collaborating with Stations program, where local public TV stations give in-kind donations and services and ITVS matches the value with cash up to \$100,000. Deadline: (LINCOS) May 25, 2006. Tip: The website has a very helpful set of downloads including "Writing a Better ITVS Treatment." And from Claire Aguilar, the director of programming: "You really have to read the instructions really carefully; like if there is a limit on the page numbers or the font size, stick to it... just be really anal." She adds, "A lot of treatments sound... more academic or more descriptive" than they're looking for. "We want to know about style and access...It's on paper so you have to describe what it will be like as a film—what you're going to see."

P.O.V., www.pbs.org/pov/. Funding Deadline: May 25, 2006. What they're looking for: Contemporary point-of-view (from a character, set of characters, community, or filmmaker) nonfiction films. Completed works of any length. Filmmakers with projects in production should email intheworks@pov.org with a brief bio as well as a projected budget and schedule. Tips: "Research your broadcast venue," suggests Cara Mertes, executive director of P.O.V. "Know what they've done in the past, make sure your film is appropriate," and be aware of the trends in the year you are applying.

** Note: Submissions accepted by the above entities are, upon completion of production, offered to PBS (and hopefully accepted) for programming in the national or regional public television schedules. A licensing agreement is made between filmmaker and consortium whereby the copyright and theatrical rights remain with the filmmaker, and PBS maintains broadcast rights for four years.*

Please email ideas for future Cheat Sheets to notices@aivf.org.



Fair Market

What exactly does the Artists' Bill mean for independent filmmakers?

By Fernando Ramirez, Esq.

If you're a filmmaker in need of a painting or a sculpture for set decoration, or perhaps a photograph to give context to your documentary, then in all likelihood you need to get permission. Normally that would entail securing a license from the creator (i.e. painter or photographer). But it also could mean having to go through an owner who is not the original creator, such as with an estate of a deceased artist or someone who holds a copyright transfer (assignment) or an exclusive license to the work such as a commercial archive.

With the rise in consolidation of corporate and commercial archives, choices



deal with. In some instances, depending on the artwork, photo, or image, public institutions can serve as an alternative. However, securing a license from say a

for independent filmmakers seem to be getting slimmer. It's tougher for filmmakers to negotiate lower quotes when they have fewer companies to

museum or the Library of Congress will depend primarily on whether the institution has an exclusive license or better still, full copyright ownership, along with the donated work.

The concept of "copyright ownership" is different from the ownership of the object. Quoting from the Copyright Act, "[o]wnership of a copyright, or of any of the exclusive rights under a copyright, is distinct from ownership of any material object in which the work is embodied. Transfer of ownership of any material object, including the copy . . . in which the work is first fixed, does not of itself convey any rights in the copyrighted

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work embodied in the object; nor, in the absence of an agreement, does transfer of ownership of a copyright or of any exclusive rights under a copyright convey property rights in any material object." For the artist, donating work along with a copyright assignment or an exclusive license, just doesn't pay.

But there's potential for this to shift in a way that could benefit the independent filmmaking community—if the twin bills currently before Congress are enacted into laws. The Artist-Museum Partnership Act (S.372) and the Artists' Contribution to American Heritage Act (referred to as Artists' Fair-Market Value Deduction Bills, H.R. 1120), would allow an artist who donates his or her work to a museum, public institution, or archival library, to make a tax deduction on their returns for the donation's fair market value—the amount that the piece would typically sell for on the open marketplace. The current law gives this tax break to art collectors, not the artist. All the artist can do after donating the work is to deduct the cost of the materials they used to create the work, such as brushes, paint, canvas, paper, etc.

For example, Carlos Collector donates a painting he purchased from Kelly Creator to the Library of Congress. Creator was a struggling artist at one time but is now a well-known artist. Around tax time, the Collector asks his accountant to deduct the donation. His accountant tells him he can deduct \$3,000, the full purchase price of the painting. On the other hand, when Creator donates one of her paintings directly to the Library of Congress, her accountant will add up the cost of the paper (\$8) and the cost of the paint (\$2), and give her the unpleasant news that she can only deduct a grand total of \$10. This tends to discourage artists from donating their work and even more so from assigning the copyright. Instead, it makes more sense for the artist to sell it to a private collector or pass it on as an inheritance to his or her estate.

In fact, attempting to access permission by contacting the estate could be extremely costly or even a total dead end—as was the case with the films *Basquiat* (1996) and *Surviving Picasso*

(1996). When the estate of the artists Jean-Michel Basquiat and Pablo Picasso refused to allow reproductions of their paintings in the films, the filmmakers were forced to create or commission work that resembled the artists' style. "Look-alike" art in film is still risky because the more the imitation resembles the original, the closer you get to copyright infringement.

Still, films frequently use artwork to convey a mood or theme—often without permission. In *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), Bruce Willis' character is brought into a room and forced to sit in a chair so that the scene resembles a drawing entitled "Neomechanical Tower, (Upper) Chamber," by the illustrator Lebbeus Woods. "Roc," HBO's series about a middle-class family living in Baltimore, aired an episode that featured a poster of a painting entitled "Church Picnic Story Quilt," by Faith Ringgold. Although Ms. Ringgold retained all rights in the copyright of the work, the actual piece was owned by a museum, which held a license to reproduce the piece and sell posters. New Line's *Seven* (1995), starring Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman, used several untitled photos by artist and photographer Jorge Antonio Sandoval. Warner Brothers' *The Devil's Advocate* (1997) used a sculpture that resembled a sculpture by Frederick E. Hart.

There was a time when artists could get a fair-market-value deduction. When the law was repealed in 1969, these donations dropped significantly. It's important to note that most painters and photographers will sell or donate their work while retaining copyright ownership and sometimes even specifically prohibiting any type of reproduction. However, under some circumstances the artist or the estate may donate artwork along with a copyright assignment. In that instance, passage of the Artists' Fair-Market Value Deduction Bills could help filmmakers with low- or micro-budget projects. It could allow museums, libraries, archives, and public repositories receiving donations and assignments as part of their collections, to pass on the consideration in the form of a reasonable or affordable license fee. ★

FESTIVALS

By Katie Ainslie

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@avf.org.

ACTION/CUT SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, CA. Deadline: March 15; May 15 (final). Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: \$35,000 in cash & services. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$40-\$85. Contact: Action/Cut Filmmaking Seminars; filmmaking@actioncut.com; www.actioncut.com.

CALIFORNIA STUDENT MEDIA & MULTIMEDIA FESTIVAL, June 3, CA. Deadline: April 15 (dates tentative, see website for updates). The California Student Media & Multimedia Festival, a competitive event held simultaneously in Northern & Southern California, showcases video & multimedia works produced by students by K-12 students; works conceived & produced by home-schooled students also accepted. Submitted works must have been produced in conjunction w/ a California school or program. Awards given in all curricular areas, incl. English & history; yearbook-class works also accepted. Exhibition formats not specified. Online application only. Cats: children, youth media, student, feature, doc, short, animation, any style or genre, yearbook. Awards: Total of \$1,000 in cash awarded to three educational institutions. Preview on VHS video or mini-DV. Entry Fee: no entry fee. Contact: Hall Davidson, Festival Coordinator; (714) 895-5623; hdauidson@koce.org; www.mediafestival.org.

CINEVEGAS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 9-17,

NV. Deadline: April 21. Held in Las Vegas at the Palms Casino Resort. The fest "will combine the excitement of world premiere films & celebrity tributes w/ the allure of Vegas nightlife. CineVegas also highlights up & coming filmmakers, as well as masters of the craft." Cats: feature, doc, short, student. Awards: \$10,000 - Grand Jury Award for Feature \$1,000 - Grand Jury Award for Best Short. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: all films under 50 min. \$40 all films over 50 min.. Contact: Festival; (702) 992-7979; fax: 898-5191; info@cinevegas.com; www.cinevegas.com.

DANCING FOR THE CAMERA: INT'L FESTIVAL OF FILM & VIDEO DANCE, June 8-July 23, NC. Deadline: March 14 (early) April 14 (final). Fest solicits dance-related work for juried public screenings at the American Dance Festival in Durham, NC. Founded: 1996. Cats: doc, short, experimental, student. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: American Dance Festival; (212) 586-1925; fax: 397-1196; adfny@american-dancefestival.org; www.americandancefestival.org.


EPFC YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL, May 20-21, CA. Deadline: April 1. Fest features works by filmmakers 25 years & younger. Cats: short, any style or genre, youth media, animation. Formats: DV, 16mm, Mini-DV, 1/2", DVD, Super 8. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Echo Park Film Center/ Lisa

Marr; (213)484-8846; echoparkfilmcenter@hotmail.com; www.echoparkfilmcenter.org.

FILM LIFE'S AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-17, FL. Deadline: April 8. Festival is 5 days of independent films, panels, workshops, Hollywood premieres, live entertainment & the ABFF Awards Dinner. Filmmakers, actors, industry executives, journalists & the film-loving public form a creatively charged atmosphere on South Beach that leads to serious business. Fest dubs itself as "the premiere int'l black film market & retreat." Founded: 1997. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Formats: All formats. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30. Contact: Festival; (212) 966-2411; fax: 966-2219; abff@thefilmlife.com; www.abff.com.

HOT SPRINGS DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 20-29, AR. Deadline: April 7; May 19 (final). Annual fest accepting nonfiction film submissions for one of the country's premier nonfiction film celebrations. Noncompetitive fest honors films & filmmakers each yr. in beautiful Hot Springs Nat'l Park, Arkansas. More than 85 films are screened, incl. the current year's Academy Award nominees in nonfiction cats. Special guest scholars, filmmakers & celebrities participate in forums & lectures. Founded: 1992. Cats: doc, short, feature. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", DVD, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$55. Contact: Darla Dixon, HSDFI; (501) 321-4747; fax: (501) 321-0211; ddixon@sdfi.org; www.hsdfi.org.

IFP MARKET, Sept. 17-21, NY. Deadline: May 1: Rolling deadlines begin. Annual event is the longest-running U.S. market devoted to new, emerging film talent. The market presents new film & TV works in development directly to the industry. Hundreds of financiers, distributors, buyers, development execs, fest programmers, & agents from the U.S. & abroad attend the IFP Market. Market filmmakers receive access to these industry executives via targeted networking meetings, pitch sessions, screenings, & more. Cats: feature, doc, work-in-progress, short, script. Awards: More than \$150,000 in cash & prizes awarded to emerging artists, incl.



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KANSAS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 15-21, KS. Deadline: March 31; April 30; May 30 (final). The fest is a celebration of independent cinema & features a Think! series of socially conscious documentaries, experimental works, foreign films, & American indies. All films screen in beautifully restored theatres operated by the Fine Arts Theatre Group in the Greater Kansas City area. The Lucid Underground Short Film competition curated w/ a 'punk tenacity' also screens during KIFF. Cats: doc, feature, short, experimental. Awards: Audience awards; \$250 cash prizes in each category. Formats: 35mm, DV Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$40 (final). Contact: Dotty Hamilton; (816) 501-3646; info@kansassfilm.com; www.kansassfilm.com.

MAINE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 14-23, ME. Deadline: April 30. A leading New England regional film fest w/ an exceptional emphasis on int'l productions. Festival seeks features & shorts "shot in Maine or w/ a significant Maine focus." Recent fest guests & winners of MIFF's Mid-Life Achievement Award incl. Sissy Spacek, & Terrence Malick. Founded: 1998. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Awards: Audience Award (Best Feature). Formats: 35mm, 3/4", Beta SP, 16mm, S-VHS, 1/2", Beta, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35; \$45 (final). Contact: MIFF; (207) 861-8138; fax: 872-5502; info@miff.org; www.miff.org.

MARGARET MEAD FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Nov. 3-13, NY. Deadline: May. Premiere US fest for nonfiction work, w/ no restrictions on subject, length, or yr. of production. Held at the American Museum of Natural History, the fest incl. forums & discussions w/ filmmakers. Founded: 1977. Cats: Short, doc, animation, experimental, student, youth media. Awards: No awards, some financial assistance & honorarium. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (212) 769-

5305; fax: 769-5329; meadfest@amnh.org;
www.amnh.org/mead.

NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL—from the NOFF website: "Unlike many film fests, we bring films to the New Orleans market that would not ordinarily be screened here. The fest also provides on-site mentoring sessions & industry panels for local filmmakers. In spite of our losses due to Hurricane Katrina, we are determined to resume programming in the near future. Our staff will continue to work w/out pay, & our board members are volunteering their time & efforts. We plan to present an abbreviated 2005 fest in early 2006, & w/ your help, we will present a full fest in the fall of 2006" See website to make a donation. Annual fest features premieres, classic film retros, panel discussions & gala events. Entries of all lengths & genres, incl. music videos, welcome. Entries must be completed after Jan. of previous year. Founded: 1990. Cats: Any style or genre, Animation, Doc, Experimental, Short, Feature, Student, Music Video. Awards: Awards based on jury selection, given in each genre, Grand Jury Prize, & Louisiana Filmmaker Prize. Formats: 1/2", 35mm (by invitation only), Beta, 35mm, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40; \$45 (final). Contact: Elisa Gallinot; (504) 523-3818; fax: 782-5792; incompetition@neworleansfilmfest.com; www.neworleansfilmfest.com.

PHILADELPHIA INT'L GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-25, PA. Deadline: April 28. Competitive fest screening int'l features, documentaries, & shorts, w/ cash prizes for both jury & audience awards. Cats: feature, short, doc, children, animation. Awards: Audience Award, Best Feature (\$1,000); Audience Award, Gay Male Short (\$500); Audience Award, Lesbian Short (\$500); Jury Award, Best Feature (\$500); Jury Award, Doc (\$500); Jury Award, Lesbian Short (\$250); Jury Award, Gay Male Short (\$250). Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (215) 733-0608 ext. 249; fax: 733-0668; rmurray@phillyfests.com; www.phillyfests.com.

RESFEST DIGITAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. - Dec., NY, CA, DC, IL, MA, OR. Deadline: April 14; May 12 (final). Annual nat'l/int'l touring fest seeks short films/videos exploring the dynamic interplay of film, art, music &

design. The Fest showcases the best of the year's shorts, features, music videos, & animation along w/ screenings, live music events, parties, panel discussions, & tech demos. The underlying guideline for submissions is Innovation. The previous years the fest toured 30 plus cities int'lly. Entries must have been completed w/in the last two years. Cats: Doc, Experimental, Feature, Animation, music video, short. Awards: Audience Choice Award w/ cash prizes. Formats: DV, Beta SP, 35mm, DigiBeta (preferred), Mini DV (NTSC). Preview on VHS (NTSC or PAL), DVD (all regions), Beta SP (NTSC), Mini DV (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: Festival; 212-320-3750; filmmaker@resfest.com; www.resfest.com.

STONY BROOK FILM FESTIVAL, July 20-29, NY. Deadline: May 1. Bringing the best in independent film to a discerning, film-loving community. Over 13,000 attending. Independent features & shorts in competition; premieres, special screenings, filmmaker panels & receptions. Cats: Feature, Short, Doc, Animation. Awards: Grand Prize, Jury Feature, Jury Short, Jury Directing, & Audience Choice Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Alan Inkles; (631) 632-7235; fax: 632-7354; filmfestival@stonybrookfilmfestival.com; www.stonybrookfilmfestival.com.

WOODS HOLE FILM FESTIVAL, July 29-Aug. 5, MA. Deadline: April 1; May 15 (final). A showcase for independent film w/ special emphasis on regional filmmakers & cinematography. Founded: 1991. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script. Awards: Best of the Fest, Best feature: drama, comedy, documentary; Short: drama, comedy, animation, documentary, experimental; Director's Choice Award for Cinematography. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: features: \$40, \$50 (final); shorts (under 40 min.): \$20, \$30 (final). Contact: JC Bouvier; (508) 495-3456; info@woodsholefilmfestival.org; www.woodsholefilmfestival.org.

INTERNATIONAL

ANTIMATTER: UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 22-30, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May

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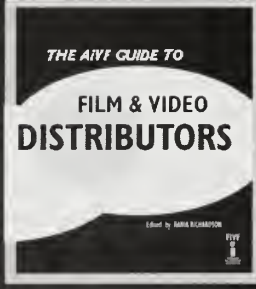
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31 (final). Annual int'l fest seeks "imaginative, volatile, entertaining & critical" films & videos. Antimatter is "dedicated to cinema as art vs. product, regardless of the subversive or dangerous nature of its content, stylistic concerns or commercial viability". Selected works may be included in upcoming int'l tours. Industrial, commercial & studio products ineligible. Max 30 min., completed w/in past two years. Founded: 1998. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 1/2", 16mm, DVD, Mini-DV, Super 8. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$20 (final). Contact: Todd Eacrett, Director; (250) 385-3327; fax: 385-3327; info@antimatter.ws; www.antimatter.ws.

AVANCA: INT'L MEETING OF CINEMA, TV, VIDEO & MULTIMEDIA, July 21-30, Portugal. Deadline: May 2. The objective is to "trace a global perspective of the contemporary features in cinema, television & multimedia". Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Cine-Clube De Avanca; 011 351 234 884 174; fax: 234 880 658; festival@avanca.com; www.avanca.com.

GALWAY FILM FLEADH, July 11-16, Ireland. Deadline: April 14 (features); May 19 (shorts). The foremost fest for presenting new Irish films alongside cutting edge int'l cinema. Over 60 features & 80 shorts screening over six days w/ int'l critics from Variety, Film Comment & other publications. Features completed after May 1, 2005 are eligible. Irish made shorts accepted only. Founded: 1988. Cats: Short, Feature, Any style or genre, doc. Awards: Best Irish short, best first short, best doc, best animation (all must be directed by Irish filmmakers) & best first feature, best Feature doc (Feature open to Int'l Competition). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: 15 euro. Contact: Cluain Mhuire; 011 353 91 751655; fax: 011 353 91 735831; gafleadh@iol.ie; www.galwayfilmfleadh.com.

KARLOVY VARY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 30-July 8, Czech Republic. Deadline: April 14. Annual FIAPF-recognized competitive fest, founded in 1946. This fest is intended for lay as well as professional public & it offers to

its visitors a carefully composed program, high-quality background, & a wide amount of services. Films must be world, int'l, or european premieres. Founded: 1946. Cats: Doc, Feature, Short. Awards: Grand Prize of Crystal Globe, Special Jury Award, Best Director Prize, Best Actor/Actress & Lifetime Achievement Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD (PAL Preference). Entry Fee: None. Contact: KVIFF; (011) 420 221 411 011; fax: 420 221 411 033; program@kviff.com; www.kviff.com.

MILANO FILM FESTIVAL, September, Italy. Deadline: May 31. Annual fest invites features films & shorts (under 45 min.) from anyone who'd like to "invent, build, & destroy new ideas of cinema." Open to all entries produced after January 1, 2005. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student. Awards: Awards incl. Aprile Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, DV, Beta SP, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Festival; 011 39 02 713 613; info@milanofilmfestival.it; www.milanofilmfestival.it.

MUNICH FILM FESTIVAL, July 15-22, Germany. Deadline: May 1. Fest is open to all genres. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: Awards for Best Int'l TV Film & One Future Prize, w/ special awards for German filmmakers. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: No entry fee. Contact: Eberhard Hauff, Director; 49 0 89 38 19 04 0; fax: 38 19 04 26; info@filmfestmuenchen.de; www.filmfest-muenchen.de.

NICKEL INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, July 18-22, Canada. Deadline: March 18; April 15 (final). The fest dubs itself as a "fest created by filmmakers for filmmakers". In addition to screenings of films & videos, the fest stages actor's workshops, Q & A periods w/ filmmakers, showcases local theatre pieces & features local music & readings between screenings. Founded: 2001. Cats: feature, doc, short, music video, any style or genre. Awards: Awards in various cats. Formats: Beta SP, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15 (early); \$25 (final). Contact: Roger Maunder; (709) 576-FEST; nickelfestival@yahoo.ca; www.nick

elfestival.com.

PARNU INT'L DOC & ANTHROPOLOGY FILM FESTIVAL, July 2-16, Estonia. Deadline: April 1. The aim of the fest in general is to support cultural survival of peoples. Only documentary films & videos of high quality, recording human activities in social, historical or ecological context are accepted. Cats: doc. Awards: Grand Jury awards & Estonian People's award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Vaiko Edur; (011) 372 44 30772; fax: 372 44 30774; vaiko@chaplin.ee; mark@chaplin.ee; www.chaplin.ee.

PLANET FOCUS: TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 1-5, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May 15. Fest recognizes that the "environment" is contested terrain, therefore invites submissions in all genres that critically examine the concept of "environment" & challenge current human/nature relations. Also, focused on works that present cultural perspectives that are under-represented in Canada & works that will have their world or Canadian premiere at fest. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP (PAL or NTSC), DigiBeta. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; (416) 531-1769; info@planetinfocus.org; www.planetinfocus.org.

REVELATION PERTH INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-23, Australia. Deadline: Apr. 17. Australia's major alternative film fest. Fest seeks to bring to Oz the best in maverick spirit & individual filmic style. Founded: 1998. Cats: Doc only for 2001, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Betacam SP, Beta SP, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: Richard Sowada, Fest Dir.; 011 61 8 9335 2991; fax: 61 8 9335 1589; admin@revelationfilmfest.org; www.revelationfilmfest.org.

SUNNY SIDE OF THE DOC MARKET, June 27-23, France. Deadline: See Website/TBA. Annual market brings together ind. producers, distributors, commissioning editors, heads of TV programming depts & buyers from all over the world. Attended by some 539 companies from 35 countries, 183 buy-

ers & commissioning editors & 120 TV channels. Market provides opportunities for project development & meeting partners w/ Side-by-Side sessions (one-on-one meetings w/ commissioning editors for advice on projects). Founded: 1990. Cats: doc. Preview on VHS. Contact: Pôle Média Belle de Mai ; 011 33 4 95 04 44 80; fax: 33 4 91 84 38 34; contact@sunnysideofthedoc.com; www.sunnysideofthedoc.com.

VANCOUVER QUEER FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, August 7-17, Canada. Deadline: April 3. Annual event screens both int'l & local Canadian films & videos of interest to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgendered communities. Festival screens work of all lengths & genres & incl. panels, workshops, & receptions. Fees paid for independent work screened. Founded: 1989. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: Cash awards; audience awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS, NTSC only. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Michael Barrett, Director of Programming; (604) 844-1615; fax: 844-1698; general@outonscreen.com; www.outonscreen.com.

WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL/AUCKLAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-30, New Zealand. Deadline: April 15. Noncompetitive fest, w/ a core program of 120 features (& as many shorts), fest simultaneously presents Auckland & Wellington Film Festivals & programs that travel to cities of Dunedin & Christchurch. Founded: 1972. Cats: Feature, Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Bill Gosden; 011 64 4 385 0162; fax: 801 7304; entries@nzff.co.nz; www.nzff.co.nz.

THE XVI INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY, SHORTS AND ANIMATED FILMS FESTIVAL, July 18-31. Russia. Deadline: May 1. Fest by the Ministry of Culture of Russian Federation, St. Petersburg Culture Committee and the Russian Filmmakers' Union, to include the debut of the international competition, "Documentary Films of Russia." Only films completed after January 1st, 2005. Awards: Cash prizes. Cats: Doc, Short, Animation. Formats: 16mm or 35mm (single soundtrack system). Preview on VHS or DVD (PAL, SECAM, NTSC). Contact: info@message-to-man.spb.ru; www.message-to-man.spb.ru.

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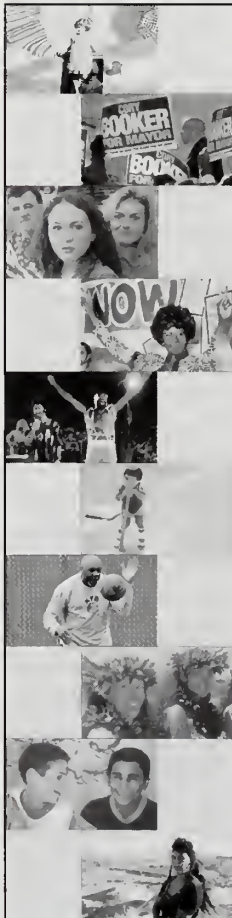
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Work Wanted

By Erica Berenstein

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AMAZE FILMS is constantly looking for feature films and short films to include in its programming. We welcome filmmakers and writers to send us their work for consideration free of charge. If you feel that your short film, feature film or documentary film that you have produced would make a good addition to the AmazeFilms programming, please fill out the film submission form: www.amazefilms.com/submissions.

BIG FILM SHORTS is a film distribution company that specializes in short films, as well as other media and formats. We serve both as sales agents for filmmakers with whom we have contracts and as consultants for film bookers and programmers, drawing on the films in our catalog as well as films we select from third-party sources. The core of our business is our film library, which contains shorts in a variety of genres, lengths, formats and national origins. A great many of our films were popular favorites and award winners at Sundance, Telluride, Cannes and other leading film festivals in the United States and around the world.

COMEDY EXPRESS TV seeks funny films

under 7 min. to show and promote on television. Please look at our website www.comedyexpressstv.com which gives more background as well as the online release which MUST accompany all submissions. Contact: Adam Gilad 9229 Sunset Blvd LA, CA 90069 adamgilad@mac.com; 310 271 0023.

FOOTAGE REQUEST The annual Avid Show Reel features clips from the most innovative commercials, documentaries, music videos, feature films, television programs, and more from around the globe. And all created with Avid editing systems and/or Softimage animation software. It's a great, free way to get valuable exposure throughout the year—from NAB in Las Vegas to IBC in Amsterdam. For details, see www.avid.com/footage/.

GLOBAL VILLAGE STOCK FOOTAGE If you are a producer owning the rights to high quality betacam footage that may be of interest to other producers, we will add your material to our database at no charge to you. We will pay 50% of the royalties we collect for the licensing of your footage. In most cases we need to have first generation copies or field masters at our facility to ensure rapid delivery to clients. We also prefer footage or programs that are logged by computer so we can readily add the footage descriptions to our database.

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GOOGLE VIDEO UPLOAD PROGRAM is accepting digital video files of any length and size. Simply sign up for an account and upload your videos using our Video Uploader (you must own the rights to the works you upload), and, pending our approval process and the launch of this new service, we'll include your video in Google Video, where users will be able to search, preview, purchase and play it. <https://upload.video.google.com/>.

THE MOUNTAIN FUND at www.mountainfund.org is looking for works that educate about issues affecting people in mountainous regions of the world. We want to add such content to our site to educate our visitors. If you are willing to have your works on our site. Please contact us.

NATURAL HEROES is a Public Television series featuring independently produced films and videos. We're searching for compelling stories that feature people challenging current environmental standards and conditions. Accepted works will be packaged for broadcast and distributed to Public Television stations across the country. There are no fees, contracts are non-exclusive, and any viewers interested

in purchasing your film would be sent directly to you. Download the Submission Form and Call for Entries from www.naturalheroestv.org Questions? Email natural-heroes@krcc.org or phone 707-585-8522 x124.

TIME:BASE is a curated exhibition of time-based media and art at Boley, an 8,000 sq ft. former bank in downtown Kansas City. Emphasis for 2006 May-June show is site-specific work and installation. Video, film, audio, installation, interactive art or performance of any type also considered. Send CD, DVD, VHS, URL or detailed proposal with entry form (www.time-base.org) to: time:base, 5100 Rockhill Rd Haag 202, Kansas City MO 64110. Tel/816/235-1708; time-base@hotmail.com.

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TV is looking for strong, original, quality educational and artistic programming for 2006. Submissions are welcomed from across the globe— from production companies, community organizations, NGOs, filmmakers, students and artists— from November 2005 through April 2006 in the following categories: Conflicts and Rights, Caring for the elderly, the sick, the disabled, and Street Arts. Films must have been completed after 1/1/98 and can be from 10 to 90 min. long. For details and submission form. For submission form

and further information go to www.udc.edu/cable_tv_19/about_cabletv_19.htm or devans-pritchard@udc.edu.

THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL is a new digital cable channel dedicated to airing, exclusively, the works of the independent documentary filmmaker. There isn't a single type of documentary that they will not show, and they are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. See the website for submission instructions. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or email programs@documentarychannel.com

SUNDAYS IN THE CITY March Movie Marathon 2006 which takes place at the Monster Gallery in Park Slope - Brooklyn every Sunday in March and the first two weeks in April is currently seeking film submissions for the event. Filmmakers with short films, feature films, documentaries, and animation films are welcome to submit. For more information, please go to the website: www.lonebeast.com/sundaysinthecity/intro.html.

NBPC

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For over twenty-five years, the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) has been dedicated to promoting, preserving and distributing programs that tell the complex and rich story of the Black experience. Since 1991, NBPC has awarded over \$6 million to independent film and video projects. Some recently funded programs include:

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Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@avf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

By Erica Berenstein

COMPETITIONS

APPLAUSE SCREENWRITING COMPETITION

calling for original works of an author or authors and not previously optioned, purchased, or produced. Adaptations (no documentaries) are welcome provided the author assumes sole legal responsibility for obtaining copyrights to the adapted work. Prizes: Script submission to agents, managers, producers, lunch with Hollywood execs, exposure and promotion packages, coverage, script critiques, software, magazines, and other great product prizes. For more information www.applause4you.com

SHORT FILM SLAM, NYC's only weekly short film competition, is looking for submissions. Competition on Sundays at 2 p.m. At the end of each show the audience votes for a winning film, which receives further screenings at the Pioneer Theater. To enter, you must have a film, 30 min. or less, in a 35mm, 16mm, BetaSP, VHS, or DVD format. To submit your film, stop by the Pioneer Theater (155 E. 3rd St.) during operating hours, call (212) 254-7107, or visit www.twoboosts.com/pioneer for more information.

48 HOUR FILM PROJECT You're Creative! You can survive on caffeine and no sleep!?! Filmmaking teams make a

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CONFERENCES WORKSHOPS

RAW WORD READINGS, a monthly readings series seeks 10-page excerpts from original screenplays. Up-and-coming actors perform 10 pages of work by up-and-coming screenwriters at Galapagos Art Space in Brooklyn, and Rock Candy (performance space) in NY Once a month. Please submit your pdf or word file, 10 compelling pages of material (include the title in the filename) for consideration rawwordreads@yahoo.com.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS: offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Nonprofit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made. Contact: (212) 319-2910 x. 9.

24TH STREET WRITERS GROUP seeking new members - Monday Nights. Well established Manhattan based screen writing group is seeking committed new members for Monday evening meetings. If interested in being considered for membership, please send a 30 page writing sample in PDF format to the24thstwriters@aol.com.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

EXPERIMENTAL TV CENTER offers grants & presentation funds to electronic media/film artists & organizations. Program provides partial assistance; maximum amount varies. Presentations must be open to public; limited-enrollment workshops & publicly supported educational institutions ineligible. Appl. reviewed monthly. Deadline: on-going. Contact: Program Dir., ETVc, 109 Lower

Fairfield Rd., Newark Valley, NY 13811; (607) 687-4341; www.experimentalcenter.org

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP - Film Forum is accepting applications for fiscal sponsorship from filmmakers. Film Forum retains 5% of all funds received on a project's behalf from foundations, corporations and individuals. To apply, email a cover letter, project description, bios of project leaders and proposed project budget to Dominick Balletta at dominick@filmforum.org. Dominick Balletta/ General Manager/ FILM FORUM/ 209 West Houston Street/ NYC 10014/ 212.627.2035.

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues, especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: To Challenge Stereotypes - We support the creation of art that reflects the full diversity and complexity of women's lives. To Increase Opportunities - We advocate for women artists to be paid fairly and to have more opportunities to make a living from their creative work. To learn more about our work, and to sign up to receive these funding newsletters, visit our web page at: www.WomenArts.org.

IFP MARKET Are you seeking financing or a producer for your script? Completion funds or distribution for your documentary? Looking to expand your contact list? The IFP Market is a great place to begin: the only selective forum in the US to introduce new work to an industry-only audience of sales companies, fest programmers, distributors, broadcasters, producers and agents from the US and abroad. Rolling deadlines begin May 1. Application fees and Attendance fee upon acceptance as well as other details can be found online at www.ifp.org starting March 1. For more details call 212-465-8200 x 222 or email marketreg@ifp.org

WGBH LAB, a program of PBS affiliate WGBH Boston, invites independent filmmakers and innovators from related industries to produce or post-produce an independently funded film for a six- to nine-month residency at WGBH from September to May. The Filmmaker-in-Residence grants WGBH a right of first refusal on new proposals, finished programs and/or program concepts for local or national broadcast or development. The Filmmaker-in-Residence will curate or participate in screenings and portfolio sessions with WGBH colleagues. The Filmmaker-in-Residence program is open to independent filmmakers and producers from related industries such as commercial television, feature films, advertising, Web, or animation. New England area residents are given priority. See <http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/producingfortv/index.html> for details.

KQED-TV IN SAN FRANCISCO like most local PBS affiliates provides in-kind post-production assistance to a number of independent projects each year. Subject must be compelling & of interest to KQED's viewers, or attract new audiences. Material must pass technical evaluation for broadcast quality. Producer must supply rough cut for review. KQED also takes on a number of co-productions each year. For more info, call (415) 553-2859 or go to www.kqed.org/tv/indieproducers/.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND for Women Filmmakers \$20,000 scholarship offered by Muse Media. San Francisco Women's Film Festival forms relationship with Muse Media to support women filmmakers to complete their films. For more information about how to qualify for the scholarship contact: scholarship@womensfilmfestival.us, the SFWFF website at womensfilmfestival.us.

THE TEXAS FILMMAKERS' PRODUCTION FUND is an annual grant awarded to emerging film and video artists in the state of Texas. Funded through revenues from benefit film premieres and private and corporate donations, the

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TFPF is our effort to redress the loss of public funds for filmmakers. Application available at www.austinfilm.org/tfpf/ in March, 2006.

MICROCINEMAS SCREENINGS

911 MEDIA ARTS CENTER was incorporated in 1984 and is considered Washington State's premier Media Arts Center. 911 screenings are booked quarterly. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Quarterly deadlines are as follows: Spring -> Last day of February. Summer -> Last day of May. Fall -> Last day of August. Winter -> Last day of November. Submission Address: Screenings Committee /911 Media Arts Center / 402 9th Ave N. / Seattle, WA 98109 / (206) 682-6552 / info@911media.org.

FILM AND VIDEO 825 - Series of bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. In a city dominated by Hollywood, venues such as ours become a necessity for artists working in time-based media that is outside the mainstream of narrative cinema. Our curatorial vision is open to both shorts and features in experimental, performance, animation, and documentary forms. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652-8272, F: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html.

ROOFTOP FILMS Submit your movies! We are currently accepting films for our 10th anniversary season, the 2006 Summer Series. We want motion that tell us about where you live and how you live, and we seek independent movies with original ideas, of production values. We accept films of all genres and lengths. The festival consists of weekly shows in parks, along piers, in historical locations or on rooftops in New York City. Curators encouraged to submit entire programs of films. For information, please visit www.rooftopfilms.com or email Dan Nuxoll, programming director,

at submit@rooftopfilms.com.

BROADCAST CABLECAST

AXLEGREASE PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE SHOW Tuesdays at 2:00 PM on Channel 20 Become part of current media making history and submit your media work to be shown on TV, on our legendary public access cable show. Commercial free, 100% media art TV. Provide us with mini-dv, vhs, svhs, or 8mm video (ntsc) tapes with a running time of 28 min. or less. Your work may also be displayed in our storefront window. Your entry will become a part of our Member Viewing Library unless you include an SASE. AxleGrease is open to local and international artists. Send tapes Attention: AxleGrease. Formats accepted: mini-dv, s-vhs, vhs or dvd. Visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.

DUTV, A progressive, nonprofit educational channel in Philadelphia seeks works by indie producers. All genres & lengths considered. Will return tapes. BetaSP, DV, dvd accepted for possible cablecast. Contact: Debbie Rudman, DUTV, 3141 Chestnut St., Bldg 9B, Rm 0016, Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927; dutv@drexel.edu; www.dutv.org.

GET YOUR FILM SHOWN ON SKY! Propeller TV is the new national channel for film and television talent, to launch in the new year on SKY. The Film First strand of the channel is looking for short films to be considered for broadcast. They can be any length and genre. You don't have to be Spielberg to be considered for the channel, you could be an independent filmmaker or even a community-based group. Please send films on DVD for broadcast consideration to: John Offord, Propeller TV, c/o Screen Yorkshire, 46 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7EY john@propellertv.co.uk (0)7724 243680.

THE SHORT LIST. Weekly, half-hour international short film series on PBS and Cox Cable now licensing for 14th season. Considers shorts 30 secs. to 20 mins (fiction, animation, documentary). Send DVD screener with application

form downloaded from www.theshortlist.cc.

WIRESTREAM FILMSEARCH seeks films for broadcast. WireStream Productions, in Co-operation with WireStream networks, is seeking independent films and television series for broadcast. Genre welcome include Drama, Comedy, SciFi, Fantasy, Nonfiction/ Reality and Educational films and series, suitable for general/mature audiences. All entries must be available for all rights worldwide. Entries previously presented are eligible subject to confirmation of rights. Submit entries to Wayne Hicks, Executive Producer, via email to wayne@wirestreamproductions.com, or by Parcel Post to WireStream Productions, 3005B W.Hwy 76, Branson MO 65616.

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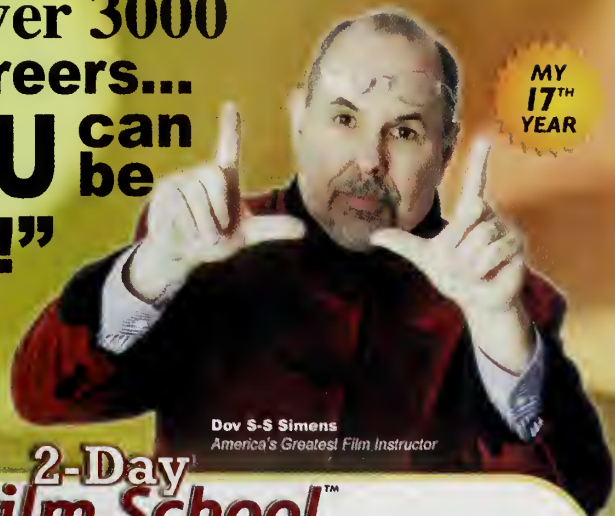


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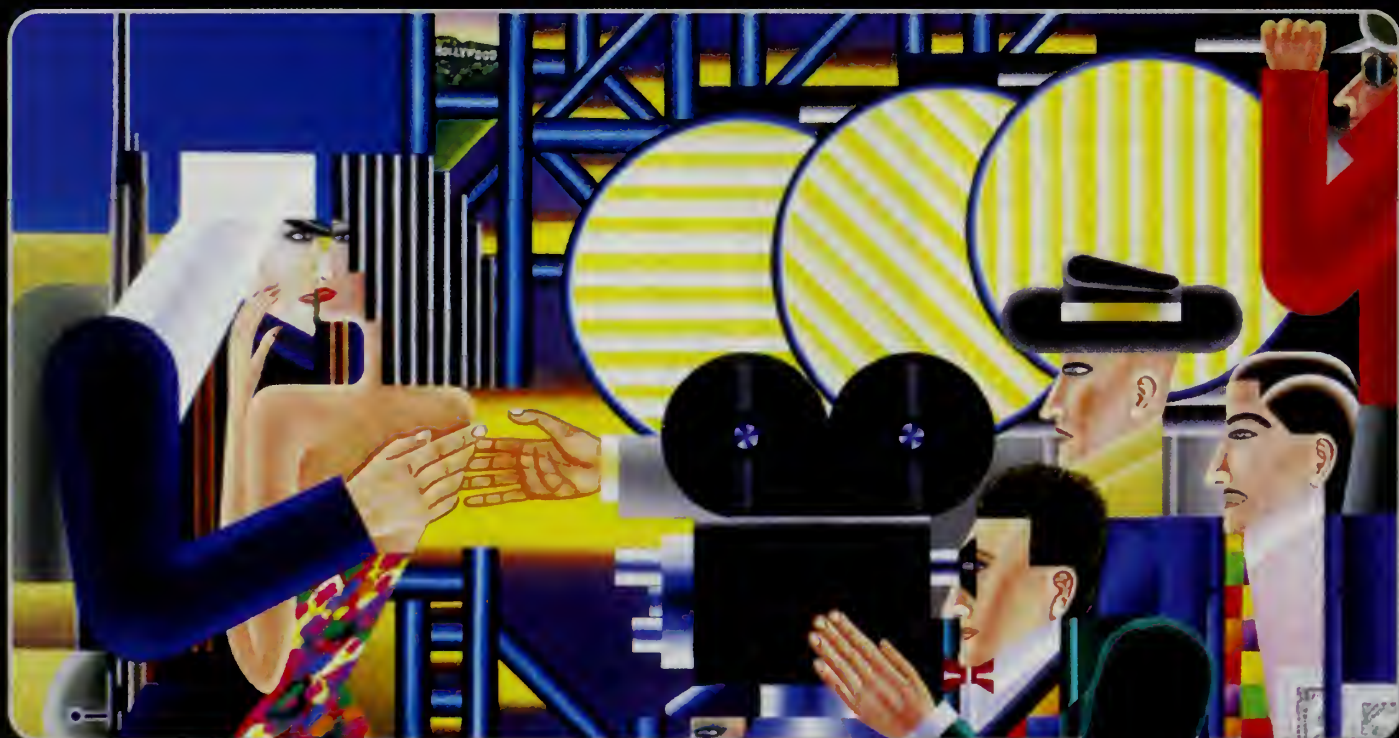
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The Los Angeles Film School logo is a large, stylized profile of a human head facing right. The head is filled with various film-related icons, including film reels, a clapperboard, and a film strip. Above the head, the text 'FROM DREAM TO SCREEN' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the head, the text 'THE LOS ANGELES FILM SCHOOL' is written in a large, serif font. At the bottom of the logo, the text '877 9LA FILM • lafilm.com' is displayed. Below this, the address '6363 Sunset Boulevard Hollywood, CA 90028' is listed, followed by 'Accredited College, ACCSCT • Career Development Assistance'. At the very bottom, a small copyright notice reads: '© 2006 The Los Angeles Film School. All rights reserved. The Projector Head image and the terms "The Los Angeles Film School" and "From Dream to Screen" are registered trade marks or service marks of The Los Angeles Film School.'

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THE LIST

Why Watch?

By Erica Berenstein

Public television has been the first place to broadcast new and innovative shows, and the last haven for others. What has public television—the home of ITVS, “P.O.V.” and “Independent Lens”—meant to independent filmmakers? Does the value lie in the content, the spelling lessons, the politics, or the opportunity for getting independent films out there?

“While I have never aspired to have my work broadcast on PBS, it has always played a formative role in my development as an artist. I can’t remember the exact moment when I jumped from “Sesame Street” to “Frontline,” but within those two polar broadcast cultures is embedded an authentic dedication to the viewer. Without the simplistic or exploitive drive for a commercial payoff, PBS resonates with integrity and that has been the primary goal for me in all of my films.”

—Stephen Marshall, director, *BattleGround: 21 Days on the Empire’s Edge*, *This Revolution*.

“Public Television is more than a network; it’s an institution. And if there’s any question as to its lasting influence and ongoing relevance, just ask anyone who grew up watching “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood,” “The Electric Company,” or “Sesame Street.” As a child, I remember watching this sort of thoughtful children’s programming when fun and knowledge weren’t mutually exclusive terms.

PBS was also the first channel to air such shows as “Siskel & Ebert” on Sneak Previews for budding cinephiles everywhere. In high school, I remember catching a screening of 1983’s *Koyaanisqatsi*, which promptly blew my mind with its hypnotic montages of time-lapse cinematography wedded to Philip Glass’ ethereal score. Simple and sublime. This is what public broadcasting is all about, and I’m a far more sophisticated and open-minded artist and viewer as a result of PBS’s legacy of risk-taking programming with a heartbeat.”

—Neil Kendricks, filmmaker and film curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego

“PBS has been the holy grail for integrity content since I started as a nonfiction filmmaker. At age 23, my first ITVS gig felt like my first proud step into professionalism. On a spectrum where pay television often leans too far towards commercial values and educational video tends too far toward needing to shoot spit balls in history class to stay awake, PBS most often meets the knowledge-thirsty viewer where she’s at.”

—Jeff Zimbalist, director, editor, producer *Favela Rising*

“North Carolina’s PBS station UNC-TV does terrific work on behalf of indie filmmakers with its ‘North Carolina Visions’ series. The series has televised and supported early work by over 200 indie filmmakers, including David Gordon Green, Tim Orr, and up-and-comers Ramin Bahrani and Danny McBride. That said, I never liked “ZOOM” or “Electric Company,” and I still don’t.”

—Jeff Bens, author, *Albert, Himself*, director, *Fatmans*

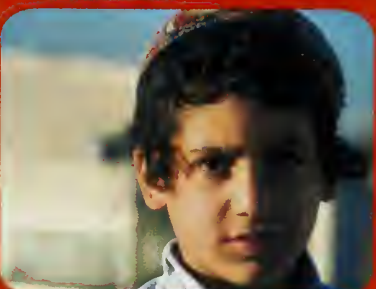
“Public television absolutely changed my life. Cinema 13, which I grew up watching as a kid in Westchester, 1) completely transformed my early film education; 2) got me sneaking into the city to see Truffaut, and 3) showed me that Alfred Hitchcock and Ingmar Bergman were BOTH geniuses, even though one was a scary genius in English and one was a scary genius in Swedish.”

—Suzanne Fedak, head of theatrical distribution, Koch Lorber Films



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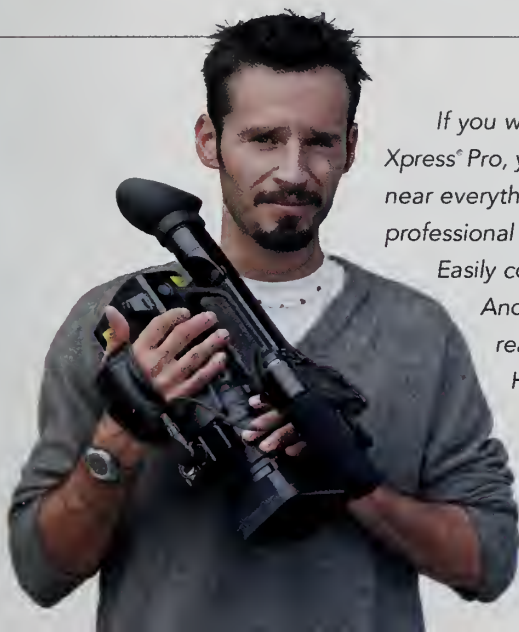
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Cover: Lee Daniels' film, *Shadowboxer*, comes out in June. (Peter Svarzbein)

Below: The protagonists of Larry Clark's new film, *Wassup Rockers*, are free-spirited—to say the least. Here Kiko flees a bubble bath and Janice Dickinson. (still by Larry Clark)



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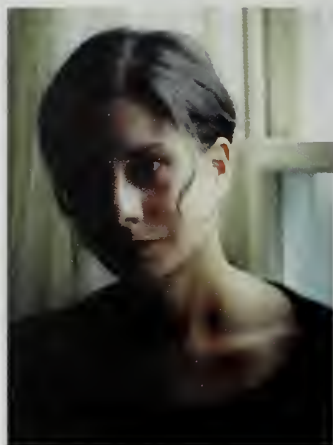
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Shana Liebman: Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

It's 2:34 a.m. I tend to write these letters late at night. Actually, I tend to write most things late at night, after the rest of the world has gone to bed, and I can feel alone, apart. I think this is the way it is for a lot of writers.

Filmmakers, I've always thought, do it differently. While their creative planning may be solo, executing their vision usually requires others: techies, consultants, lawyers, actors/subjects. This mandatory collaborative process has always seemed to me both a blessing and a burden.

But things are changing. In just the past year, the increase in affordable DIY options for creating, screening, marketing, and distributing, available mostly via the web, have made it easier than ever to make a film without as many middlemen. As Erica Berenstein explored for this issue, online showcases like IFILM and Youtube.com allow filmmakers to share their shorts with many more potential viewers and distributors than say a film festival would. Similar online services have also radically altered the process of selling features, as Anthony Kaufman explains. And more arthouses, and therefore more screens for indie work (plus cappuccinos), are sprouting up all over the country, according to Danielle DiGiacomo.

But is the increased access actually helping or hurting media makers? Angela Martinez spoke to a wide range of filmmakers about what they've had to compromise in order to get their films made,

and whether eliminating these sacrifices is better (or worse) for their art.

We've informally called this issue the indie survival guide, which has inspired more enthusiastic pitches than usual. I'm not surprised. As artists, as media makers, as urbanites, we're experts at, as well as infinitely curious about, finding new ways to approach a challenge. (As I write this, my faulty toilet is running, and I just realized that I've been trying to pretend the noise was a gurgling stream.)

Since it's often the individual stories that best illuminate survival tactics, we spoke to four fascinating though incredibly different artists who have made it work despite the odds—from Larry Clark, whose *Kids* rocketed a new style of reality filmmaking in 1995 and who returns to the scene with *Wassup Rockers*, to Georgia Lee whose feature debut *Red Doors* is the beginning of a long though initially unlikely career. *Monster's Ball*-producer Lee Daniels explains, in his own very compelling voice, the story of directing his first feature, *Shadowboxer*, about a unique mother/son relationship. And producer and former AIVF board member James Schamus who almost (and probably should have) brought home the Oscar for *Brokeback Mountain*, talks about the triumph of Focus Features and the new landscape for independents.

This issue also introduces our new and improved Tools column—written by the extremely knowledgeable Mike Curtis, aka the HD-for-Indies guy. Also new is the "Outtakes" column, which highlights unique and useful developments in the industry—Plum Pictures "DocStock," *McSweeney's Wholphin* (where DVD meets magazine), and the fifth annual tour of the Bicycle Film Festival.

This is one of those issues that, honestly, is just a good read from start to finish—no matter what time it is where you are.

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
The Independent,
Shana Liebman
Editor-in-Chief

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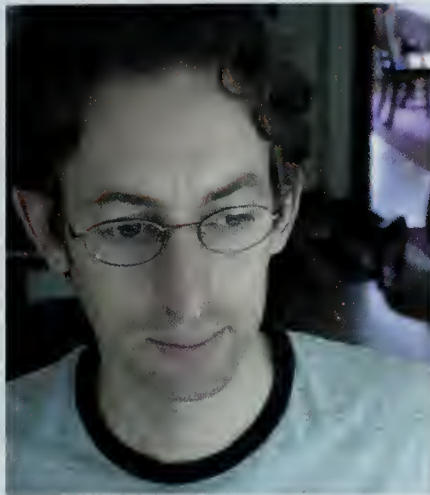
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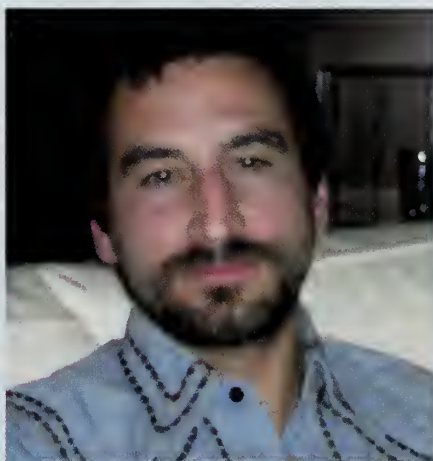
CLAUS MUELLER has authored books, articles, and presentations on communications issues. He has been the recipient of several awards, including two Fulbrights. He teaches media research and sociology at Hunter, works as a correspondent for print and electronic publications, and as a consultant for independent productions. Among his projects is the organization of the annual issue-oriented New York Screening Conference for policy and opinion makers, which includes a Congressional Briefing and focuses this year on 'Women and HIV/AIDS'. Claus Mueller serves on the board of directors of several nonprofit organizations and is a member of the American Council on Germany, the Carnegie Council on International Relations, the International Radio and Television Society, and the Foreign Press Association. He received his education at the University of Cologne, the Institut d'Etudes Politiques and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, and the New School for Social Research.



ANTHONY KAUFMAN has written about film and the film industry for the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Urine Magazine*. He is also a regular contributor to *The Wall Street Journal* online, the *Village Voice*, indieWIRE, and *Filmmaker Magazine*, as well as the editor of *Steven Soderbergh: Interviews*. He can be found at blogs.indiewire.com/anthony.



ANGELA MARTENEZ is a native New Yorker still taken with her hometown. She has produced projects from commercials to documentaries, including programs for PBS, The History Channel, and HBO/Cinemax. Angela is currently in production on her first documentary feature.

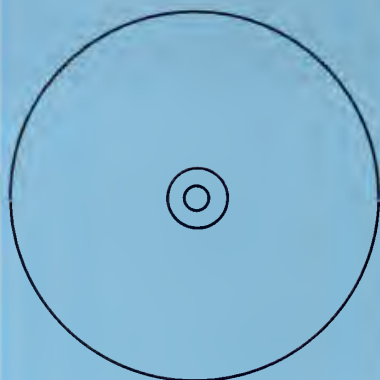


DEREK LOOSVELT recently received an MFA from the New School. His writing has appeared in *Brill's Content*, *Inside.com*, *Blue Magazine*, and *Pindeldyboz*, among other publications. He lives in Brooklyn.



MIKE CURTIS is an HD production and postproduction consultant based in Austin, Texas. He runs the informational website, HDforIndies.com, and has been working in digital media production for over 15 years. He now focuses his efforts on high-quality, low-cost moviemaking using HD and desktop based tools. He can be reached at mike@hdforindies.com.

n DVD

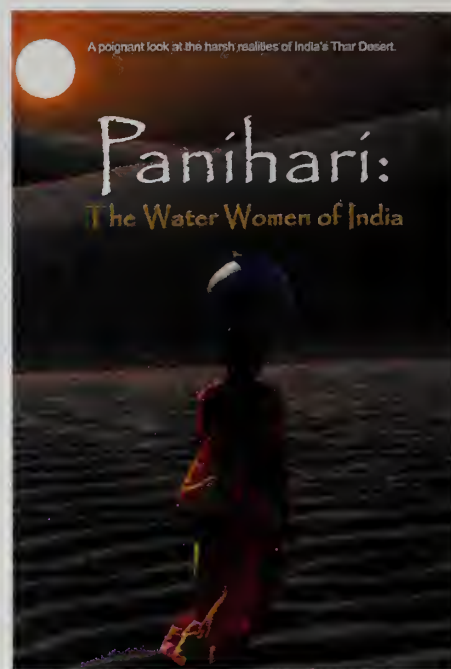


Reviews of films now available on DVD



Slasher, www.docurama.com

This IFC documentary directed by John Landis culled its material from over 100 hours of footage taken during one kamikaze weekend at a used car lot in Memphis. Landis, better known for his offbeat *chef d'oeuvre*, *Animal House*, wanted to make a political film about the evils of capitalism but instead got suckered into the morally vacuous personality of Michael Bennett a.k.a the "Slasher." Touted as a "superior" used-car salesman from southern California, Bennett is flown into Tennessee to help a desperate dealership move some "stale merchandise." He and his two partners plan to sell over 30 cars in one weekend and to do so, they besiege one small unsuspecting community with signs, balloons, and official phony Mont Blanc pens. It's immediately apparent why Landis found this guy fascinating enough to film—he spends his Memphis days in a fever pitch: drinking, smoking, and scamming unsophisticated consumers with a grizzled sort of grace. Then he goes home to his loving wife and daughters where for an average of six days a month he actually likes himself. Soulful, Southern music provides a welcome respite from Bennett's tireless cacophony of sales-speak and self-analysis, and one wonderful scene is stolen outright by a beer-guzzling goat. Unfortunately, as the film focuses on Bennett's personal issues, it becomes less interesting. Searching in vain for a point, *Slasher* drags to an end, and feels significantly longer than its 85 minutes. DVD extras include making-of and deleted scenes, which are just as unentertaining



as the rest of the film. Five seconds into the audio commentary, Landis announces himself by saying "It's not my fault," and I realized that I would rather use chopsticks to extract my left eyeball than listen to the rest. Car salesmen and recreational heroin users, however, might enjoy this film.

—Jeffrey Baron

Panihari: The Water Women of India, www.choicesvideo.net

This short documentary (30 minutes) weaves beautiful images of camels, sand, and neon-colored plastic water carrying bottles in with the hardship of women who walk eight miles, several times a day, to provide water for their families. *Panihari* is an intense portrait of the lives of the women of the Thar desert, but the constant intrusion of the male co-directors' narrating voices risks turning it into a travel log when they make unnecessary, forced statements such as, "To understand the desert, we would have to go there." The choices in the use of narration create a similarly constructed atmosphere when the voice of the central character, a woman who keeps her face covered until long into the interview, is dubbed over by a translator's voice. *Panihari* is a significant film—and worth seeing if you can forgive the unnecessary and almost narcissistic presence of the directors in the audio track—because water, arguably the most important natural resource we have, rarely gets this kind of attention in a world where war abounds, and oil does not.

—Erica Berenstein



Bukowski: Born Into This

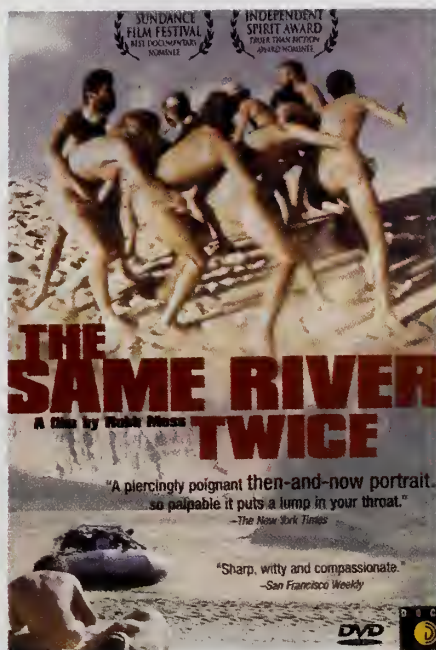
www.magpictures.com

In his first feature, director John Dullaghan tells the story of Charles Bukowski through a series of interviews the writer gave for European television in the '70s and '80s. A formidable raconteur, he talks about losing his virginity; his struggling years spent working as a mail carrier; trying to get published; the bars; the booze; the succession of women. Especially compelling is Bukowski's unique sense of the poetic in everyday life — he can make the experience of using the toilet sound like a spiritual event.

The Bukowski interview footage is deftly interwoven with commentary from people who knew him: girlfriends and wives (in one Jerry Springer-like moment, Bukowski fights on camera with then girlfriend Linda); publishers, William Packard of the *New York Quarterly* describes Bukowski's legacy: "He was devoted to the 'de-Disneyfication' of all of us... to kick the Mickey Mouse right out of our heads." Hollywood icons—from Sean Penn and Bono to Tom Waits and Harry Dean Stanton—lend perspective on the poet's wider impact.

Two noteworthy extras among the extended interviews and deleted scenes: Tom Waits gives an inspired reading of "The Laughing Heart," while Bono takes on "Roll the Dice" with quintessentially Irish élan. Their distinctive voices and adroit handling of the text make me wish the two would record a Bukowski 'tribute' album.

—J. Fagen

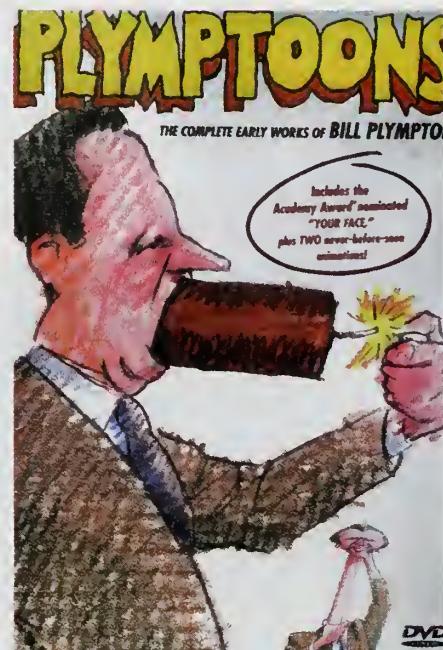


The Same River Twice

www.docurama.com

In 1978, filmmaker Rob Moss and his free-spirited buddies spent a month in the Grand Canyon—rafting and camping, mostly naked. Moss filmed that experience for *Riverdog* and 20-odd years later interspersed that same footage with commentary from the baby boomers those hippies had become. But *The Same River Twice* is not one of those films about people whom the filmmaker finds fascinating because he knows them. It's actually a very entertaining portrait of several adults and their reflections on how they got to now. Some of the characters are more articulate or just more charismatic than others (like Jim who lives in a half-trailer), but even the less eccentric characters' commentary, cut with scenes of them 20 years before debating rafting strategy on a beach full of naked bodies, is poignant. Fifty-year-old Barry's discovery that he has cancer, and his pursuit of treatment and adept reflections on the experience, lend a refreshingly unpredictable plotline. I'm not sure the film achieves the "cultural/pharmacological time-line" that Moss anticipated, but it is a very interesting portrait of the journey to adulthood—what that means to different people, especially those who have the opportunity to actually watch their youthful selves at play. In that sense, this film is testament to the power of cinema as a cultural and historical tool. DVD extras are not particularly thrilling—a long lecture Moss gave at Harvard, for example, doesn't lend much background.

—Shana Liebman



Plymptoons: The Complete Early Works of Bill Plympton

www.newvideo.com

The 23 included pieces run in chronological order beginning with "Self Portrait" and "The Great Turn On," two of the very first animated shorts Plympton completed in the late 1960s (while in college) and running through cult favorites such as "25 Ways to Quit Smoking," "How to Kiss," and the Academy Award-nominated, "Your Face." Though his films get technically more masterful (the characters in "The Great Turn On" are little more than stick figures), from the very first film, his trademark shimmer and shake, achieved by filming one drawing for every four frames of film, is already present—a testament to the consistency of his vision. Constant also is Plympton's dark brand of comedy, which wavers between pleasantly odd and cringe-worthy (one character noshes on buttered toast which has just landed face down on a very dirty floor). In the DVD extra, "Sunday with Bill," an interactive interview with Plympton during which he details his journey from child to cartoonist to animator, he explains his affinity for the bizarre as merely honesty about what goes on in his head. Also in the candid interview, Plympton discusses his own technical heroes, the moment he realized he could make it as an animator, and how nervous he was the first time he screened his animation—a must-watch for any enthusiast. Other extras include a nine-minute silent doc of Plympton at his drawing board and a sketch gallery of frames from a few of his well-known works, "Your Face" among them.

—Katherine Dykstra

Outtakes

Taking Stock of Docs



Rebecca Carroll interviews Dan Lohaus for "DocStock"

By Derek Loosvelt

There are 150,000 homeless Vietnam veterans in the U.S. In addition to the 59,000 American soldiers killed in the Vietnam War, an estimated 59,000 more committed suicide after they returned home. These are a few of the statistics that prompted Dan Lohaus to make *When I Came Home*, a documentary about homeless war veterans living in the U.S. These are also a few of the statistics Lohaus highlighted while discussing his film on "DocStock," a new cable-access TV show that profiles documentaries-in-progress and their directors.

Interspersing trailers with interviews, "DocStock" features films in various stages of development, from pre-production to post. The show airs on Plum TV—a network serving viewers in Aspen, Vail, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and the Hamptons. According to "DocStock" executive producer

Jage Toba, Plum's well-to-do audience partially inspired the show's creation.

"I wanted to get documentary filmmakers' work out there," says Toba, who used to make historical documentaries for Channel 4 in the UK. "And since Plum's audience includes people in the film business and the arts, I thought I could get the word out to influential people." Toba also figured he could air the trailers documentary filmmakers put together in the early stages of their projects.

After Plum gave Toba the green light, he asked Rebecca Carroll, *The Independent's* editor-at-large, to host the show. She accepted, and, in December 2005, the pilot aired.

That first episode featured Gideon Gold's *Misery Loves Company*, which follows an invasive and eccentric New York-based street photographer, and Neil Davenport's *King of Laughter*, a look at the rise of laughter clubs in India, Europe,

and North America. Subsequent episodes have profiled films that focus on subcultures such as synchronized swimming and male hula dancers as well as more serious issues such as South African street children and the socioeconomics of the Georgia lotto system.

Although the primary goal of "DocStock" is to publicize

independent documentaries-in-progress (Toba is also developing a sister show called FilmStock profiling features-in-progress), it also focuses on how documentaries are made and why. According to "DocStock" assistant producer Sasha Sagan, "One of the most fascinating things about the show is learning how filmmakers came to certain topics."

Tim Nackashi and Crystal Wooten's *Under The Spell*, featured in the third episode of "DocStock," began when Wooten filmed fantasy card game tournaments in Atlanta. At a gamer hangout called The War Room, someone suggested she check out a Live-Action Role-Playing (LARP) event, sort of a physical incarnation of Dungeons & Dragons where players create characters with fantastical strengths, weaknesses, and personality traits. LARPer, as players are called, also create their own costumes, tend to stay



Harold Noel in *When I Came Home* about homeless veterans



Opening night of the Bicycle Film Festival draws bikers from all over NYC

in character during entire events, and are known throughout the LARP community as their characters rather than themselves.

"At the first event we attended," says Nackashi, "we were immediately entranced by the social dynamics of the game and the emotional investment that goes into creating a character. It seemed like people wore their hopes and dreams on their sleeves."

"Sleeves," Nackashi adds, "made of chain mail."

Lohaus' *When I Came Home* began as a documentary about homeless Vietnam vets but ended up focusing on homeless Iraqi vets and eventually became about history repeating itself as the number of homeless Iraqi vets rose from just a handful at the beginning of his shoot to over 500 one year later.

In March, two months after Lohaus appeared on "DocStock," *When I Came Home* was accepted by the Tribeca Film Festival, and though Toba admits "DocStock" had "no direct impact" on the film's acceptance, he says, "It certainly didn't hurt."

If you have a documentary project in progress and are interested in appearing on "DocStock," contact: Sasha Sagan, Plum TV, 419 Lafayette 7th Floor, New York, NY 10003. For more information, check out www.plumtv.com/shows/docstock

Films on Wheels

By Erica Berenstein

"**T**all Bike Jousting, Track Bikes, BMX, Alleycats, Critical Mass, Bike Polo, Cycling to Recumbents... we've probably either ridden or screened it," is the motto for the Bicycle Film Festival, which screens features and shorts that tap into the growing urban bike culture. Last year's festival attracted over 17,000 people, and 40,000 people are expected at this year's fest, which takes place in 10 cities starting in New York City in May.

In addition to providing complimentary valet parking... for your bicycle, the festival, which began in 2001, attracts a range of musical and film talent from Blonde Redhead to Jonas Mekas, and hosts block parties and parades to channel the enthusiasm surrounding the screenings

of the bicycle-themed films. The launch party will include a celebration of *Pedal*, a book of photos by Peter Sutherland.

Over the past year, submissions have poured in from around the world—from bike-lovers and film-lovers alike. "We've created a whole subculture," says Festival Director Brendt Barbur, excitedly explaining that "we don't kid ourselves, we're not Sundance... we're not in the film industry, we're not in the bike industry, and people from both love it." He explains that increasingly accessible technology has made it possible for people who have little to no filmmaking background to make films that express their passion for this sport.

Bicycling has long been used as a tool in clean-air campaigns and has recently been used for other activist causes, as well. For example, during the Republican National Convention in New York City, Bikes Against Bush, a project started by emerging-technology artist and political activist Joshua Kinberg, began using Wi-Fi-enabled bicycles to fight the incumbent. While the Bicycle Film Festival is not overtly politi-

cal, it is a chance for people to do more than send a \$100 check to the Sierra Club, says Barbur. "Riding a bike is an environmental act," he insists.

From May 10th through May 14th in New York City. Take the Second Avenue bike lane to Anthology Film Archives in the East Village at 32 Second Avenue at 2nd Street for the New York premier of B.I.K.E., a film about the Black Label Bike Club, as well as other films that might inspire you to find a new way to get to work.

DVD, Meet Magazine

By Katherine Dykstra



What do you get when you mix a whale and a dolphin? A wholphin (that's a fact). What about a magazine and a DVD? Same thing.

Wholphin, a quarterly DVD of short films that is meant to be watched like a magazine is read—in multiple sittings—is one new effort to keep good shorts from slipping into obscurity.

"I went to Sundance in 2003 and saw a bunch of films and some of the shorts were the best things there, and they just disappeared," says Brent Hoff, *Wholphin's* editor. "I was like, 'Wow, how many of these are out

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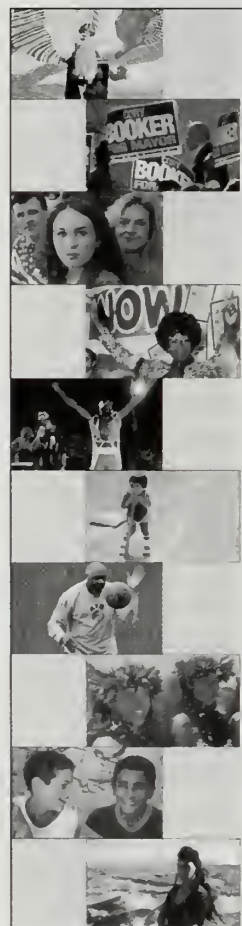
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there and just get lost?"

Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is most of them. Though not if Hoff can help it.

Produced by the collective that publishes the literary magazines *The Believer* and *McSweeney's*, *Wholphin's* debut issue is comprised of 12 films that range from oddball to affecting. The lynchpin of which is a 13-minute documentation of a day in the life of Al Gore. The *Al Gore Documentary* was made by Spike Jonze, before the election of 2000, and Hoff believes that if it had been widely seen, America might now be under different leadership.

"OK, I might have overstated the case a little [in the liner notes], but you're going into a highly contested campaign and the big problem is that [Gore] is a stiff suit, not really a person," says Hoff. "But then you have a film that shows that, yeah he's stiff, but he's a good guy who cares about his family, who's the real thing. And it's made by a respected filmmaker, but it doesn't get seen. It certainly wouldn't have hurt his chances."

Though not all of the films showcased in *Wholphin* have the element of squandered potential impact like Jonze's did, they all are worth a look. Included are a four-minute short written by Miranda July and starring John C. Reilly, an animated film about the death of a hen, and a Turkish sitcom subtitled verbatim from the original and then five more times by other writers who re-imagined the plot and dialogue.

Future issues will include pieces by Steven Soderbergh, a short from the writers who created "Freaks and Geeks," and a crying competition. There are no rules.

"A guy singing 'Stairway to Heaven' backwards trips my trigger, a beautiful literary film like *The Big Empty* trips my trigger. Iranian animation trips my trigger," says Hoff. "I want there to be things like that, that don't ever fit into the wacky viral world of the internet." ★

Ask the Documentary Doctor

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

My current film is doing really well. Can I use the hype to finance my next project even if I don't know what it is yet? And how soon should I start that process?

What a great problem to have! If you are the dozen-ideas-a-minute type, by all means get ready to answer the "What's next?" question. Have a verbal pitch ready and, if possible, some physical materials to hand out as well. But be careful not to allow your enthusiasm for the new project overshadow the current one—especially if you don't yet have a signed deal for the current one.

If you don't have a second project in the pipeline, don't worry. The void could be the result of creative exhaustion or the recent overwhelming attention. For some, wearing the business hat every day kills the creative side. Others don't even consider this until a few years later when they realize the party is over and they find themselves empty-handed.

In addition, documentary topics are more likely to be happened upon than to be forced out of your head with sheer willpower. Even writers who have the luxury of inventing stories have trouble finding inspiration, and it's harder for doc-makers who can't just make things up but have to



find them in real life.

It's important to remember, however, that good films leave a comet tail. Press clips, among other things, are good indicators to prospective funders of your past glory. You shouldn't be afraid of a temporary creative vacuum, but when industry

people or audience members ask, "What's next?" it's always better to answer than to appear stuck or uninspired. Tell them about the next step for the distribution of your current film or rattle off some topics you might be interested in for future docs. Who knows, once you put the word out, your next film might come knocking at your door.

Dear Doc Doctor:

Since I decided on the subject of my next film, it suddenly seems like a lot of people are working on similar ideas. Does it make more business sense to drop it and

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look for something else?

That's good news. It means your selective perception is in sync with market needs. And don't for a moment think that no two filmmakers could possibly be working on similar topics. As a grant panelist, I was shocked to see how even the most obscure topics came up in pairs and even trios!

Even if you are in a category all your own, it doesn't guarantee you an audience. Funders, distributors, and festival directors have their own agendas and tastes. They won't settle for a film they don't like just because there is nothing else on the topic. Plus, the clones are no reason to quit your documentary. Think about how many films there are on hip-hop, HIV/AIDS, 9/11, Iraq—just to name a few.

Your first reaction might be to distance yourself from those making films like yours. Viewing the work of your perceived competitors can be painful—not to mention skew your analysis of what you are watching and making. But for many, the dilemma becomes: Do I watch theirs and risk being influenced by it, or not watch it and be ignorant of it? In many cases you won't even have this opportunity—you'll read about a film but have no access to it. Then your imagination can run wild making up all kinds of scenarios. An imagined competitor might even be worse than the real thing.

The bottom line is that you should try to find out about all the concurrent and past projects that touch even tangentially on your topic. It's better you find out about the other films on your own, rather than be told by someone you are pitching (which makes it look like you haven't done your homework.) Your funders will want to know—and sometimes will already know—what else is out there and how your film will be different. In the end, there isn't much you can do about similar projects, other than keeping yourself informed. ★

Fernanda Rossi, a filmmaker and story consultant, is the author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer.

Breaking Down the *Doors*

Perspective is everything: Georgia Lee reflects in New York City



Georgia Lee sheds light on the average American family

By Sarah Coleman

Picture an American family living in the suburbs of Connecticut. Dad, newly retired, is suffering bouts of depression; Mom is a cheerfully oblivious homemaker. There are three daughters: an over-achieving businesswoman, a shy doctor-in-training, and a high school senior with sociopathic tendencies. Increasingly distant from one another emotionally, each family member struggles to establish an identity and find meaning in life.

Chances are, in your mind's eye, that family is WASP, or at least Caucasian—more John Cheever than say, Amy Tan. But watch Georgia Lee's debut feature *Red Doors*, to be released next summer, and that perception might change. Lee's film about a Chinese-American family bypasses the typical first-

generation, culture-clash immigrant story—the Wongs are nothing if not typical middle-class suburbanites who could match any typical WASP family, dysfunction for dysfunction.

"I wanted the film to be about these people who are struggling to communicate with their family, struggling with the trials and tribulations of life," says Lee while munching on a chicken and avocado salad at Edgar's Café in her neighborhood, Manhattan's Upper West Side. She flips her long, glossy hair over one shoulder. "Being Asian-American is part of it," she says, "but it's not the whole story."

The whole story is, in fact, infinitely more complicated. In *Red Doors*, middle sister Julie embarks on a love affair with another woman, while youngest sister Katie flirts with a neigh-

bor boy by exchanging "love tokens" in the form of dead rodents, flaming animal feces, and small explosives. Perhaps most affectingly, father Ed embarks on a series of botched suicide attempts then flees home for a Buddhist monastery shaking the family up and forcing them to take stock of their own lives.

Red Doors is a story of a family that's taken a wrong turn, yet the love the characters have for each other—despite their lack of true communication—is poignant. Lee says that's how it was for her own family for a time. "We'd get together once a month and have dinner, and we'd talk, but we weren't really connecting. You know, people are talking but nobody's really listening. And nobody knows what the other person's life is like."

“Being Asian-American is part of it,” says Lee. “But it’s not the whole story.”

Given its subtle, bittersweet script and wonderful ensemble acting, it’s not surprising that *Red Doors* has been a hit on the festival circuit. It picked up, among other awards, the Best Narrative Feature prize at the 2005 Tribeca Film Festival. Not bad for a film that was made for under \$200,000 and whose main location was Lee’s parents’ house. Lee is clearly overjoyed. “When we started making this movie, we thought that if it got accepted by one festival, we’d be thrilled,” she says.

“We” is Lee and her two co-producers, Jane Chen and Mia Riverton. The three met at Harvard, where Lee worked for Chen at the university’s daily paper, the *Crimson*. As well as sharing Asian backgrounds (Riverton is a hapa, or half-Asian), these women share a desire to break the mold and resist stereotypes. The fact that their production company, Blanc de Chine, takes its name from a form of Chinese porcelain is meant ironically. “Obviously, we’re not delicate little flowers,” says Lee with a smile. True enough: Though barely 30, she emanates poise and confidence. Loud, staccato bursts of laughter punctuate her speech, showing a refreshing ability not to take herself too seriously.

Before *Red Doors* secured a deal for a theatrical release, CBS and Paramount Network TV commissioned Lee, Chen, and Riverton to write a pilot for a one-hour television drama based on the movie. Currently, the project is being held, but Lee hopes that the deal indicates a growing openness to Asian stories in Hollywood. “Frankly we were thrilled that they were even open to the idea of an Asian-American family on prime-time television,” she says.

Ultimately, with all due credit to Chen and

Riverton, *Red Doors* is Lee’s movie. Not only was it shot in her childhood home and based to a certain extent on her family (her youngest sister Kathy even plays the role of Katie, the youngest Wong sister), it also features authentic 1980s home video of Lee and her sisters. Ed, the father in the movie, watches this home video to remind himself of happier times when his girls were innocent youngsters doing Chinese folk dances and ice-skating turns.

“Yeah, I hated all of that,” Lee laughs, referring to the ballet, tap, jazz, and Chinese folk dancing her mother insisted she learn as a child. “When you’re forced to do something, you rebel against it. But it’s one of those things you appreciate when you grow up.”

In the Lee household, there was a clear line between artistic pursuits and future careers, which Lee says is fairly typical of Asian-American culture. She sums it up this way: “You can learn piano, but you should never become a pianist; you can study ballet, but you should never think of going to Julliard. You should of course do all of those things because they’ll help you get in to a good college where you can become a doctor or lawyer.”

In her darkly hilarious 2001 short *Educated*, Lee examines the pressure Asian parents put on their children to be high achievers. In the film, immigrant Chinese mothers hold their teenage sons and daughters on actual leashes and force them to perform piano concertos or recite their SAT scores. The film’s imagery is surreal, but the level of control symbolized by the leashes is not far off the mark, says Lee. “It’s hard to explain. My father chose all my courses at Harvard, which I thought was totally normal.”

Obviously, then, being a filmmaker wasn’t



going to cut it for Lee’s parents. So, being “a good little Asian girl,” she says, she went to Harvard to study biochemistry, then worked for the prestigious management consultancy McKinsey & Company. One summer, she took a leave of absence from work to take a crash course in filmmaking at NYU. “It changed my life,” she says simply. “I’d hate being in the McKinsey office any time past nine o’clock, but I’d stay in the editing room until four or five in the morning and not know what time it was. You just know when you fall in love, right?”

One of the shorts she made that summer, *The Big Dish*, about the fallout from China’s 1989 crackdown on student dissidents in Tiananmen Square, was inspired by an early Martin Scorsese short about Vietnam. Her professor said she should send it to Scorsese



The ladies of the Wong family (L to R) Kathy Shen-Lin, Freda Foh Shen, Jaqueline Kim, Elaine Kao discover that dad is missing.

so, not knowing any better, Lee stuck it in the mail to the director's fan club. Five months later, she was working on a cost-cutting study in Florida when she picked up a message on her voicemail: "Marty watched your short. He loved it, and he'd like to meet you."

The meeting led to what Lee calls "the most amazing film school anyone could ever have": a chance to be Scorsese's apprentice on the Rome set of *Gangs of New York*. "I literally just followed him around and filled up dozens of notebooks with sketches and notes," she says.

After that, it was only a matter of time before she quit her job, though her escape route wasn't immediately clear. Her mother Elsie was ill, and begged Lee to go to Harvard Business School—so she did. After one semester, she'd had enough. "I realized I'm ready to

make a feature. Maybe nothing will come of it, but I have this story I want to tell and I'm just going to do it." She took a leave of absence from business school and moved in with Riverton, who was working as a television producer in Hollywood. Chen came on board, and the three started raising money for *Red Doors* as Lee typed out the screenplay in Riverton's kitchen. Five months later, they were in production with family and friends kicking in everything from cameos to craft services.

Hers is a miserable-riches to happy-rags story (though one suspects riches are not too far off for Lee), but the happiness is tinged with more complex emotions. First, there was the death of Lee's mother from cancer while *Red Doors* was in post-production. Before she died, Elsie Lee got to see a rough cut of the



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Sam (Jaqueline Kim) goes for a walk with her father (Tzi Ma) and ends up at a monastery

movie. ("She thought it was a horror film because the lesbian love story scared her so much," laughs Lee). But she didn't live long enough to witness the film's success. "I just wish she knew that it was going to be ok and that I'm not going to end up as a bag lady," Lee sighs.

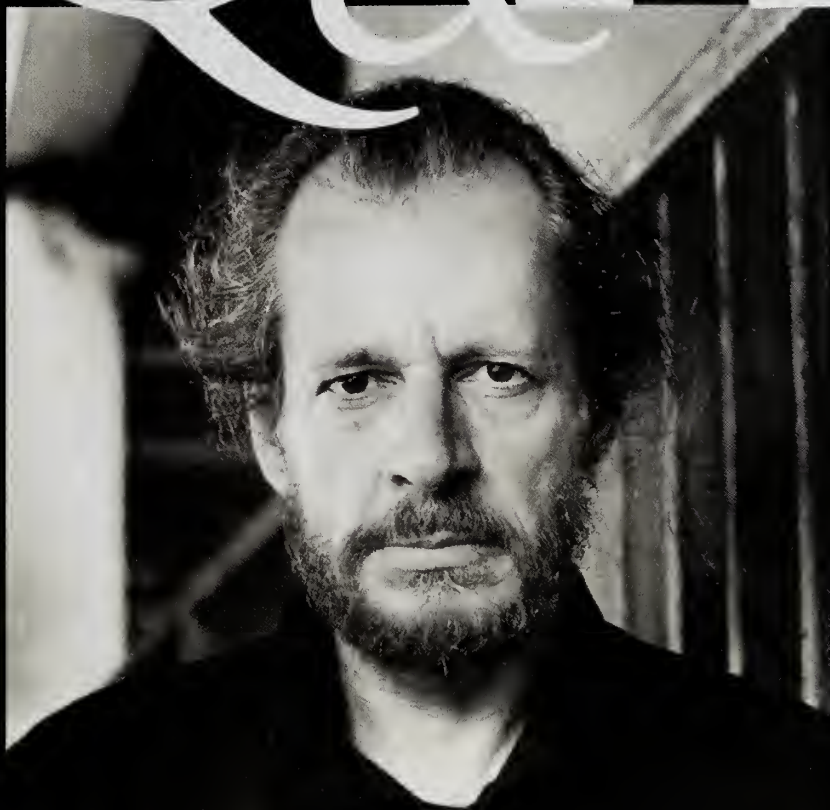
Then, after *Red Doors* was completed, another event knocked Lee sideways. The forum section on the film's web site started filling up with assaults, allegedly from Asian men, who were angry that the film's Asian females are romantically involved with Caucasians. Pressed for details, Lee blushes furiously. "I'm so embarrassed. We were called every name you could be called. The message basically was, 'Georgia, why don't you just stab your Asian brothers in the back?'"

Though she laughs it off as the "Angry Asian Male" syndrome, Lee is clearly hurt that she was attacked by her own community. "I understand their grievances," she says. "We're on the same team. I think Asian-American men are emasculated in the media and Asian-American women are fetishized. But I don't think my film does either one of those things!"

In fact, she says, she had originally cast Asian men in two of the love interest roles but both dropped out at the last minute. "I had to recast really quickly. I just cast the actors I thought would fit those roles the best, be they Asian, white, African-American, or whatever." She goes on to point out that at the end of the movie, only one of the sisters actually ends up with a white guy. "So sue us!" she says, rolling her eyes.

The casting choices might have come as a result of circumstance, but they also illustrate Lee's philosophy about the film—and life in general—namely, that her characters' human qualities are more important than race, religion, or sexuality. Her next project, *Forbidden City*, is a film noir, and she has hope that other Asian-American directors will start to delve into genre films without feeling they have to represent the entire community. "I really, sincerely believe that we will transcend gender, racial, and religious stereotypes when people start to look at people first and foremost as human beings," she says. "What's your soul like? Your spirit? To me, that's when we've reached some meaningful level of human understanding." ★

Q&A



LARRY CLARK

By Katherine Dykstra

Larry Clark's films are shocking. There's *Kids*, about drug-using, AIDS-carrying, sexually active Manhattan teenagers; *Bully*, the true story of a group of teens who murder their tormentor; and *Ken Park*, which was so sexually explicit, it was never released in the U.S. These films are shocking because they capture a reality most people don't want to know exists.

Wassup Rockers, Clark's newest film, about teenage thrasher-rock-loving Latino skateboarders from South Central, LA, is just as shocking as his previous undertakings. And that shock is also born of reality—but with very different results. While it's difficult to empathize with the characters from *Kids* and *Bully*, no matter how “real” they may be, *Wassup Rockers*' stuttering dialogues and patient camera-work make it impossible not to be moved. The sheer intimacy of Clark's portrayal of this rowdy group of kids—who want to be just that... kids—is what's unexpected.



In one of the most intimate scenes in the film, Kiko explains to a girl he just met what it's like to be him.

Katherine Dykstra: I saw *Wassup Rockers*, I guess over a month ago now, and I loved it. I thought it was wonderful. I just fell in love with those kids.

Larry Clark: Yeah, the kids are quite charming, aren't they? They're quite appealing I should say.

KD: I read that you sought them out initially to photograph them.

LC: My last film, *Ken Park*, was opening in Paris, and a magazine, *Rebel* magazine, wanted me to make some photographs for them, and it seemed to be good press for *Ken Park*. So I came out to California with Tiffany Limos, the actress in *Ken Park*, and I was going to photograph her with some of the actors from *Ken Park*, but they weren't around. So I said, 'Well, we'll just go out and find some skaters from the street.' And we

were driving around, and we went down to Venice Beach and met Porky and Kiko. So it was like serendipity. I ended up photographing them for four days with Tiffany. When I went back to the magazine to give them to them a couple months later, I started thinking about a film about them.

KD: And what do you think the kids thought about that?

LC: I think that it was probably a little hard to believe. I ended up hanging out with them for over a year. When I took the magazine back to them, they wanted to go skating again, of course, so I took them skating. And then the next Saturday at 9 o'clock, they called me, and they said, 'Where are you? We're waiting to go skating.' So I got up, and I went out, and I took them skating all day, and then fed them, and then it kind of became our Saturdays.

KD: Did you skate with them?

LC: I learned how to skate before I made *Kids*. We're talking about '89, '90, '91. I skated for quite a while, but I kind of retired. My knees are pretty much shot. And going around with these kids before we made the movie, I was climbing over fences, and I jumped off roofs a couple of times. And you know, 60-year-old guys shouldn't be jumping off roofs, which I found out.

KD: Sounds like fun though.

LC: I was going out there and picking them up, sometimes 12 kids. I had a little 1995 Toyota Camry and just stuffed with these Latino kids and this old white guy driving them around. Sometimes there would be way more kids than I could possibly get into the car. And so one day they said, 'Well, we'll trunk it.' And I said, 'What do you mean,



you'll trunk it?' And they said, 'We'll get in the trunk.' And I said, 'Are you crazy?' So I opened the trunk and like three kids got in there. They were perfectly happy to ride in the trunk, but I'd be driving, and I would think, 'What if I get stopped and the cops open the trunk and there are three more kids in the trunk? This is going to be weird.'

KD: There's a scene in the film where they get in the trunk, is that where that came from?

LC: That's where it came from.

KD: Is that how you write your movies?

LC: That's how *Kids* happened. For my first film, I wanted to make a movie about contemporary teenagers. And I started hanging out with skateboarders and all the ideas for that film came from reality, from things I'd

seen happen and stories I knew to be true and this film was like that too. This is kind of about kids, 11 years later.

KD: Those kids from *Kids* are different from the kids in *Rockers* in so many ways.

LC: Absolutely. *Kids* was about a specific group of downtown kids in New York City, street kids in New York City, and this is about Latino kids in the ghetto in South Central Los Angeles, where it's all gang bangers and gang-infested neighborhoods and very dangerous place to live and so it's different.

KD: But that's a little bit counterintuitive because I would think that the South Central kids would be hard, but they were so soft and sweet.

LC: They don't want to be gang bangers; they're just kids. There's lots and lots of kids in the ghetto that don't want to join gangs and you just don't really hear about those kids. One reason to make this film is that you never see these kids in film. I said, 'Well that's a good enough reason.' I wanted you to meet them.

KD: The first half was taken from their lives...

LC: The first half I'm really trying to recreate things that have happened. This kid that all of us knew named Creeper, that was always hanging out around Kiko's house, got killed. Some gang bangers just drove by and saw him and blew him away, shot him 9 times. And a couple days later we went over to the shrine and lit a candle and they made the sign of the cross and said a little prayer. That actually happened, so I put that in the film at the last minute and kind of opened the film with that because it really shows you how dangerous it is for these kids just to get up and walk down the street to go to school a few blocks away.

KD: But then suddenly the film changes... there's the Janice Dickenson character and the Hollywood-type guy who was throwing the party that the kids crashed...

LC: Fuck with the white people. [laughing] I

just started having fun. I said, 'You know some Paris Hilton-type girls, who just want to fuck hot boys, will see them, and then they'll get to Beverly Hills. And then the girls' boyfriends will come, and then there will be a fight and they'll have to run and they'll jump a fence and then they're in someone's backyard in Beverly Hills, who are they going to meet there?' And so then I just started goofing on it and having fun. And I said, 'Well I bet Charlton Heston has been sitting out there for 25 years in his backyard with a rifle waiting for a person to come and get caught as a trespasser and shoot him.' That's how that started. I just started goofing, because I don't really want to make documentaries.

KD: Why aren't you interested in documentary?

LC: I want to make real movies.

KD: So a documentary isn't a real movie?

LC: Ah, I'm just joking; I want to make features.

KD: My absolute favorite scene is the one with Kiko and the girl on the bed.

LC: That is just a magical scene. When we were filming it, I was thinking, 'This is my movie. This is what I'm trying to do.'

KD: It was so intimate, it was almost hard to watch.

LC: My job as a director was being able to get Kiko in a situation where he was comfortable enough to talk about his life that way. He had had those conversations with me, one-on-one, very personal, and I wanted somehow to recreate that. I told [the actress that played Nikki] that I wanted her to draw it out of him and to ask questions, and I told him I wanted him to tell her about his life. The big secret was having them make eye contact and not break the eye contact, and by doing that after a while it was like there were no cameras and there was no one else there and they really had this conversation.

KD: Would you talk about working with nonactors? That's kind of your style.



They were dubbed rockers, because of their long hair and tight jeans.

LC: With good actors like the actors in *Bully*, you can ask them to do something and they just do it. Working with nonactors, it's very, very difficult. It's successful in my films because I really get to know the people, and I know what I think they can do, and they know me, and they trust me, and they know what I'm trying to do. And especially this time was difficult because I'm working with very young, we're talking 14-, 15-, 16-year-old kids, who are ghetto kids, who's world is basically South Central. Of course they get out a bit, but they never knew any white people before. They had a few teachers in school who were white, but outside of school they just don't have contact with white people. These kids are pretty wild too, they have this energy and this zest for life. Kids live in the moment generally, but these kids really live in the moment. To all the sudden say, 'I'm going to make you movie stars.' It just wasn't going to work to say 'Ok, come in, sit down, and be quiet while we get everything ready... now get up and be yourself.' Their process was to just be themselves the whole time. They were wild. They were themselves. They were difficult all the time. But that was their process, which I understood. It was very, very difficult for the crew. I pretty much lost my camera crew at one point, who just kind of didn't get it after a while, and couldn't deal with the kids.

KD: Literally?

LC: No, no, they were still there, but I was kind of dragging them along. I was determined to make this work. I don't think anybody knew what I was doing. I think they started looking at it as 'Larry's folly' after a while. And now... some of the people who were working on the film have seen it, and they called me, and they said, 'We had no idea what you were doing; this is really great.' They didn't have a clue to the kind of film I was making, I don't think.

KD: Were you confident the whole time?

LC: Yes.

KD: You could see it?

LC: Yes, it was just difficult. I think the reason why I'm able to do difficult things like *Wassup Rockers* or *Kids* is because I have a very clear vision. You know I've been a visual artist for 44 years, and I know what I want it to look like, and I know the kids so well, I know what I need them to do and how I want to present them. But if I didn't have that, it just would have been a mess.


KD: How do you get your movies made?

LC: It's very difficult. People think that since I've had successful films that it must be easy to get the money. But it's never easy to get the money. I think that a lot of people are

afraid of what I'm going to do. I'm a final cut director. No one can change my films. And that's unusual. I've never sold out. I've certainly been offered a lot of money to make a studio film, to make a Hollywood film. But you sell out, you give up final cut and then they can take your film and they can do what they want to with it. And I can't do that.

KD: Can you talk about controversy? Your films are kind of notoriously controversial.

LC: Well, that's not my fault. I'm trying to create a reality. Well, *Wassup Rockers*, the last half is pretty crazy, but generally I'm trying to create a reality that makes sense. People are afraid of reality. When I made *Kids*, come on, people went crazy. Saying, 'This isn't right. This is Larry's fantasy. This isn't what it's like.' And then all the kids said, 'What's the big deal? This is just what it's like.' It's a secret world that I was showing you. And after *Kids* came out, all anyone has to do is read the papers over the next few years and I was right on, I was just early. And plus Hollywood is... there's been films made with all of these subjects covered, but they make a joke out of it. They make these films and they can have sex and drugs and whatever you want to do. But if you make a joke out of it, it's ok. But if you do it seriously, oh my god, some people get upset. ★



One-two punch

Helen Mirren is one tough mother

From script to screen, *Shadowboxer's* wild ride

By Lee Daniels

I thought that making *Monster's Ball* was rough. I vowed upon wrapping that film that I would never make another. After the accolades and success of that film, I was offered tons of projects from studios for lots of money (which I really could have used.) But all of them were jokes: *Who's My Baby's Cousin's Daddy*, *Leprechauns From the Hood* (really). I felt that as a black filmmaker, my sophomore attempt at film should be just as interesting as

my first; that I should not sell out.

Then Sherry Lansing, chair of the Paramount Motion Picture group, rang and asked what I wanted to do next. She is such a class act. Upon our meeting, I spoke of my passion for *Shadowboxer*. Written by William Lipz, it's the story of Mickey, an abused kid who ends up killing folks for a living and yet somehow we feel sorry for him. She personally drove me in her golf cart to the head of her

classics division, Ruth Vitale. Ruth had issues with the third act but, regardless, greenlit it.

At first Anjelica Huston was attached. My respect for Anjelica is off the Richter scale. She seemed perfect to play the role of Rose, Mickey's mother, a woman who is dying of cancer, a contract killer in love with her stepson. Even though I thought she'd sorta been there done that in *The Grifters*, the role was still a tour de force for any actress in her age



Leading the way: Lee Daniels coaches Helen Mirren on the set of *Shadowboxer*.

range, and I'd figured she'd bite. She did! Soon after, however, a whole range of conflicts arose, and I decided that I would rather walk away than to compromise my vision for the film. In my gut, I knew that *Shadowboxer* would be back. Don't ask me why, but I did.

I went back to the drawing board to try and find a film of substance, hence *The Woodsman*. The process of begging people to invest in a movie about a pedophile was beyond humiliating. And yet again, accolades. With accolades, your balls grow. Accolades put hair on your chest. Accolades can even make you think you can direct. I was looking for something edgy, something raw. In other words, something me. On our very

last day of shooting *The Woodsman*, writers Nicole Kassell and Steven Fechter rang to tell me that *Shadowboxer* had gone bye-bye at Paramount Classics. Second to my kids arriving into this world, it was the happiest day of my life!

Shadowboxer was a film I originally set out to produce. What I love most about producing is giving first-time directors a chance, a voice. With *Shadowboxer*, I decided to give myself that chance.

I called the director Oskar Roehler in Berlin. He had been attached at one point to the film, and is also a friend. I asked if he thought I could direct. He said yes. I believed him... well, sort of. If anything, I'd use this

directing thing as an exercise for how to work better with my directors. I figured if I could just step into their frame of mind it'd make me a better producer. Again, I faced the grueling task of raising cash for a controversial film—this time about a mother and stepson who are lovers and contract killers.

Even as I write this, I think I am insane. I loved the concept, the idea, the premise. The abuse in this film was what struck the biggest chord with me. I was scared because it seemed too close to home. But I am at my best working from fear. I began calling the studios and as expected: pass, pass, pass. I wasn't bothered or deterred because that has always been my experience with studios. I walk in, pitch, and

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And Cuba Gooding Jr., the tough son of a...

they look at me like my dad used to when I'd tell him things like "I wanna be a ballet dancer when I grow up." Being made to feel odd has been a life experience for me. It's almost my comfort zone.

Anyway, I was blessed again by a group of private investors that gave me money for my baby. They didn't really believe in the story. They believed in me. I talked them into giving me half of my budget. I'd raise the rest later, and start casting and crewing up immediately—with a firm start date. Fuck a bond. We'd worry about those matters later.

What gave me any credence as a director? If I were an agent I don't think I'd let me direct either. I forgot to mention that's what gotten me here. I spent 20 years trying to find actors work—as a talent manager... don't ask. What I did learn from those years was how a set worked; I spent my life on sets around the world with some of the greatest filmmakers of our time.

For the mother role, I was floored that Helen Mirren wanted to take a chance with me. I have been obsessed with Helen Mirren since forever. I figured it'd be more interesting if someone like Cuba Gooding Jr. was cast, so that the whole interracial mother-son thing took us into another world. He has been my friend for 100 years and jumped on. I cast Mo'Nique in the role of Precious. The role was written as a 23-year-old white model chick. Her lover is the genius Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Macy Gray plays a nymphomaniac—funny as hell. With all of my characters, I cast against type because I wanted to show the world that people are more diverse than the cookie-cutter images that mainstream media spit out.

In life we unknowingly cross paths with many people who have horrible secrets. This story gives life to their existence. I was fortunate to have David Mullen shoot. Lisa Cortes, my best friend, produced. I conned Vivienne Westwood into costuming. Wow. But even with all these amazing talents, this was the most difficult experience I have ever taken on. As I think back, I don't know that I would do this again. The hardest part was raising money at night while shooting during the day. I was away from my kids for more than a year. Still, out of a hard labor came my new kid, *Shadowboxer*. And I love him. ★

SHOW US YOUR SHORTS



The men behind YouAreTV: From left, Steve Cordova, David Dundas, and Jesse Sanchez

The internet gives short films a whole new audience

BY ERICA BERENSTEIN

"I don't know how big of a historian you are," begins David Dundas, one of the founders of YouAreTV, a video hosting site launched at the beginning of this year. "But this whole technology thing is kind of equivalent to when the printing press came out."

A printing press of sorts, indeed. Websites that provide video download and streaming services allow filmmakers, proud parents, essentially anyone with a video camera, webcam, or video-enabled cell phone to make their content available online for free. The possibilities for short-filmmakers are especially enticing. But the proliferation of websites has not only provided short filmmakers with new, increasingly accessible platforms for their work, it has fostered an explosion of quantity. In keeping with the short-film-as-calling-card model, some filmmakers, animators, and amateurs are using the web to promote their work. Many more are creating content specifically for online pres-

entation, an enormously popular category often called "user-generated" content. Short films with high production value and meticulously crafted scripts that used to be condemned to the shelf after a few festivals have populated the web, often competing for viewers with funny, crass, and no-budget shorts like *The MySpace Movie*, (www.davidlehre.com/myspace/play.htm). Much of the traffic that passes through video hosting sites like YouTube.com and video.google.com, as well as veteran sites like ifilm.com (owned by Viacom) and AtomFilms.com, arrives via the viral effect: people follow links they've received in friendly emails. Online availability of short films and user-generated content—the line between the two is increasingly difficult to define—is overhauling the distribution paradigm into one based on word-of-mouth and broad appeal. Online video is becoming contagious and short filmmaking is evolving.

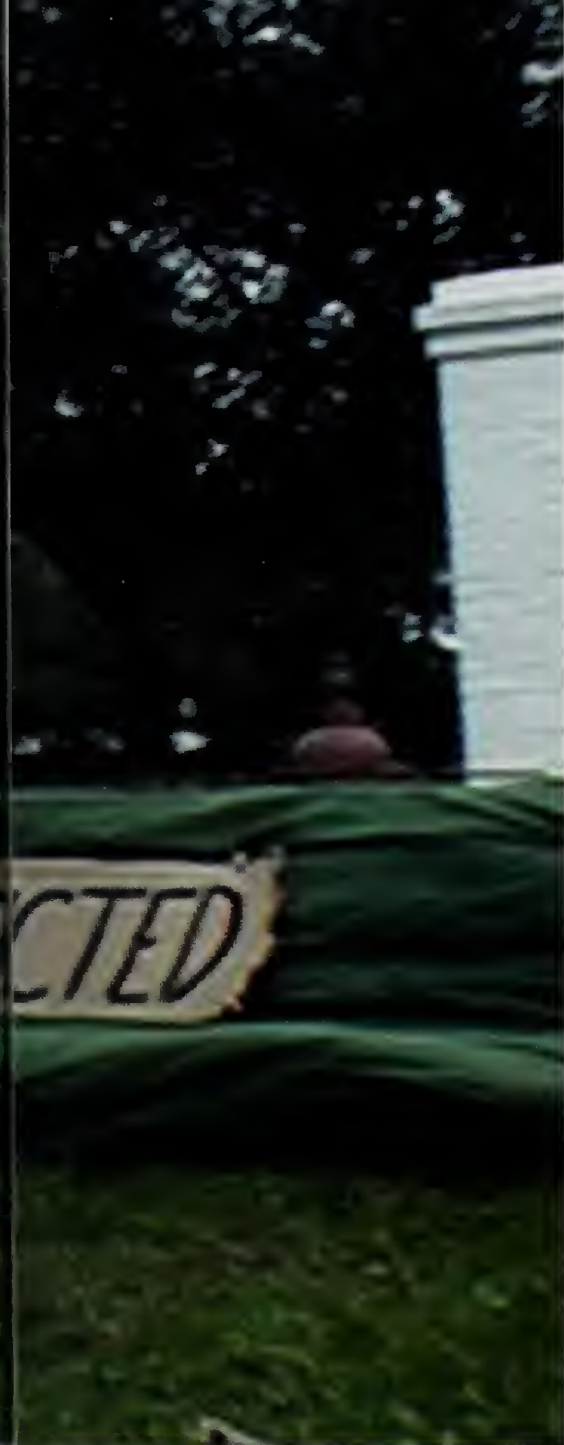


Flux Rostrum, the man behind *NO Eviction* (pictured), a YouAreTV news-style short about post-Katrina evictions, says he tries every free video service at least once.

Roger Jackson, vice president of content and programming at IFILM, a video-streaming site that launched in 1999, suggests that “film”-makers are having a hard time coming to terms with this shifting paradigm of what constitutes a short film. Jackson believes that the traditional idea of a short, a film semi-professionally made at the expense of a film student or wannabe director, is becoming less relevant in the emerging realm. A time when two barely-teenage girls can upload an anti-porn diatribe entitled “Totally Hot Makeout Session,” (www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/2689979) made with absolutely no attention to lighting or the color of the wall behind them (it’s a putrid pink) and still get 1,371,169 views in the user video sections, while a scripted, labor intensive and possibly expensively made short, maybe even shot on 16mm, often gets no more than 1,000 views.

According to Jackson, executives and agents who have met with

IFILM about discovering new talent through websites have lowered their expectations in terms of production value and formal rules of filmmaking. They respond to the wit and creative ability demonstrated by “more organic, more spontaneous filmmaking,” as well as how successfully a video taps into what people want to watch—a success that is easily measured on the internet. In terms of whether studio execs or agents spend time browsing around, in search of the next big thing, Jackson says the answer is... probably not. There is no need to. In order to see what people are responding to all one needs to do is look at the numbers. Each clip or short reports the number of times it has been viewed. Jackson says the people who three years ago were saying, “I saw a great short film on the short film channel, and I’m in development” are now saying, “I saw that clip in the user video section, and wow, that’s a great idea. That person has got some talent.”



During a recent meeting, CAA talent agents who had been poking around on the site told IFILM, based in central Hollywood, that though in the past they were looking at classic short films, “now we look at the numbers.” Numbered, it seems, are the days of orchestrated market research and focus groups. “We can figure out what creators and what creative approaches work with our audience,” says Scott Roesch, the vice president and general manager of AtomFilms, a veteran site also launched in 1999 that gets 5 million unique visitors a month. “We have some information that helps us when evaluating future projects...whether we’d want to invest in them.” AtomFilms currently has six or seven projects in development with content creators who have previously had work on the site.

This potential has not been lost on The Independent Film Channel, who launched Media Lab in January and heavily promoted it at this

year’s South by Southwest film and interactive conference. Registered users upload their shorts, and viewers vote to rank the films. The five highest ranking films are broadcast on IFC once during a given month, and according to the Media Lab website, “top ranking filmmakers will be nurtured and cultivated by IFC on an ongoing basis.” Evan Fleischer, who is in charge of the project, says that IFC has a competitive advantage over other video streaming sites, most of which do not have a television outlet and are “essentially a free-for-all.” Using Media Lab, IFC programmers can gauge what people want to watch before putting it on the air and without investing in production costs, licensing fees, or even paying a programmer to sit through the 675 submissions that Media Lab got during its first two months online. Current TV takes the same approach, encouraging viewers to upload “pods” onto www.current.tv. The shorts with the most votes are then broadcast on one of Current’s programs, VC², (viewer-created content). MySpace.com, often touted as the nexus of media-sharing and social-networking, recently launched a section that taps into what many users have been using the site for already, sharing video content. On “MySpace Film” viewers can vote on which up-and-coming filmmaker they’d like to see more from.

What kind of material gets high numbers? Brevity and comedy seem to be the recipe for success, and voyeurism is a big factor. If a filmmaker or content creator produces something “that is compelling to a wide audience and resonates with people,” says Jackson, “the bottom line is: would you rather be a filmmaker who got something into a festival where a dozen top filmmakers... said to you, ‘Hey man, that was great,’ and it doesn’t go anywhere. Or would you rather have a half a million nobodies watch it online and see all the comments.” Jackson insists that while the festival circuit is still significant and highly valued by filmmakers, “the numbers at film festivals are trivial.”

According to Jackson, 85 percent of IFILM’s 35,000 video clips gets watched every day and the majority of broadband entertainment viewing takes place during the working day. “It’s more of an ‘I’ve got five minutes at work’ thing,” says Jackson about the general preference for shorter films. Roesch calls online video streaming “the perfect entertainment snacking medium.” People like to consume short bursts of content rather than make a conscious effort to seek out specific material. “They’re not leaning back and watching an hour or two’s worth of programming at a time,” he says. “They’re surfing from one short film or one short clip to another.”

“Everything is digital, so the reach is infinite,” says Dundas, whose day job is working in content licensing and business development for mobile phones. But infinite reach can be confusing, and audiences can get lost in cyberspace among or within the multitude of websites that deal in video content. “[A film] will be up there,” says David Russell, president of the short film distribution company and sales agent Big Film Shorts, “along with 7,500 other films. It becomes ‘How do you let your world know that [your work] is even there?’” Roesch of AtomFilms, which carefully programs its site and pays royalties to all content creators, says that the shortfall of sites focused on user-generated video is the way that the most-watched videos go straight to the



Ifilm.com offers channels such as Viral Video, Shorts, and Anime, and specialized sections like Dubya and Girls



Crazy Frog "Popcorn," a short available on AtomFilms by Barbier-Lambert Adrien, Annesley Adrien, and Le Thanh Lam

top, resulting in pages filled with sexual and scatological humor.

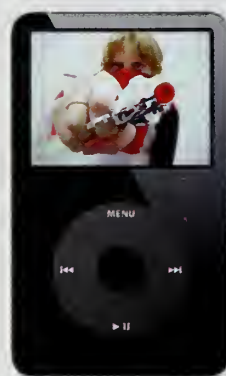
Dundas explains that YouAreTV hopes to maintain its democratic direct posting model while also trying to incorporate more than just if someone watched a clip when determining which work is featured, but whether viewers actually liked what they saw. Their plan is to hold audience attention over time—an aim fundamentally different than that of success attained by the viral effect—by making the identity of the filmmaker a central part of the viewing experience. IFILM and other sites do offer a tab or sidebar where satisfied viewers can see more work by the same creator, but think of YouAreTV as the social networking site (i.e. Friendster, Facebook) of the online video world. They are poised to use networking and buzz among community members to enable content creators to build a following. Just like in the user video section of IFILM, users can upload content unfettered by any editorial voice, but the content tends to be more crafted and deliberate and less voyeuristic, perhaps because it is so closely associated with its maker. "No one knows how independent content is going to change the landscape of media and the way that media is consumed," says Jesse Sanchez, one of the founders of YouAreTV. He explains that the hope is that successful filmmakers or content creators would build a solid, wide enough audience to continue self-distribution via YouAreTV (YouAreTV plans to share ad revenue with content creators in the near future), or that the likes of MTV will take notice as they did with *The MySpace Movie*.

Just when it seems too good to be true, Russell, founder of a traditional short film distribution outlet, cautions filmmakers about free online distribution. "Once a film is on the internet for free somewhere, or even if it's subscription and you have to pay for it, it can kibosh other kinds of deals and sales," he warns. At a SXSW panel "State of the North American Docs," The Documentary Channel's director of programming, Michael Burns, responding to a question about whether he would broadcast shorts that have been available online was initially ambivalent: "I wouldn't be crazy about it." After a few moments he leaned into the microphone and said, assertively, that The Documentary Channel's customers pay a monthly fee (similar to HBO) to get content that is not available elsewhere, especially not for free. Krysanne Katsoolis, executive producer of Cactus Three, a high-end nonfiction programming company that presented three films at SXSW, commented that while that is the case currently, the traditional model of distribution is in flux. Putting a short online right away does take away any chance of being nominated for an Oscar because the academy will not accept anything that has been online.

Ultimately, it depends on whether a filmmaker is promoting her film or herself, in which case an individual piece is a vehicle to get her name out there, and Russell concedes that in that case online distribution might be a good option. Gerard O'Malley of the BBC, who's newly launched short film streaming site Film Network, which attracts around 70,000 users per month, points out that "you're more likely to get people watching your film [online] than putting it at a graveyard slot on TV." As a result of Film Network's "virtual industrial panel," a function that allows industry professionals to register for the site in a way that identifies them as such when they post comments, several filmmakers whose work is showcased on Film Network have been approached by small production companies. Many content creators who started at AtomFilms have already started to make it big, including Jason Reitman, whose 2005 film *Thank You for Smoking* stars Robert Duvall and William H. Macy. "A lot of people come up to him and tell him the first time they saw him...it was under an AtomFilms brand of distribution," says Roesch. *Anabelle Scoops*, a series of animations by Keith Thompson, also got popular on AtomFilms and was picked up for a pilot by MTV.

"There are all these screens," says Dundas, so if Roesch's prediction that the internet and mobile devices are about to become real career opportunities for people—Dundas predicts that within 18 months video-enabled cell phones will be ubiquitous—sites that provide online film and video content will continue to add to the roster of success stories.

O'Malley has observed that "new players that we can see coming in are kids in their bedroom animating, creating animations for the web...who don't really see themselves as filmmakers." Says Jackson, "You can question as to why people find it compelling, but you can't really argue. The numbers really do speak for themselves." It seems clear that short filmmaking is becoming less about producing a polished calling card to show off to high-powered movie execs and more about building a following around brief, witty encounters that might never bring the creator a dime. A film posted on the net is significant to a filmmaker's career in terms of what it can lead to and is a venue for showing off creative prowess rather than production skills. ★



Buice and Crumley promoted *Four Eyed Monsters* by podcasting episodes

Caught in the Web Netting higher DVD sales online

By Anthony Kaufman

After failing to stir up distributor interest, Susan Buice and Arin Crumley, the pioneers behind Slamdance favorite *Four Eyed Monsters*, turned to the web as both a creative outlet and marketing tool. Employing Apple's iTunes Video technology, the couple began podcasting episodes of their 20-something, angst-ridden adventures to raise interest in the feature film. "In about nine months, we went to 16 film festivals and 3,000 people saw the film. Yet in the first 36 hours, [our podcasts] were viewed 3,000 times online," says Crumley. "So it's increased demand for a film that otherwise might have been lost in the shuffle."

"Ultimately, it's an easy way to get an audience," adds Buice, "and it's an easy way to make movies rather than going from film festival to film festival." But, calling from his parents' house in order to save money and prevent further debt, Buice admits, "I don't think people should get into video podcasting to make money."

"With these changes in digital production and distribution, nobody can stop you from making a movie and nobody can stop you from getting it out into the world," says Paradigm Consulting President and self-described optimist Peter Broderick who was a distribution consultant on the much ballyhooed grassroots release of Mark Neale's motorcycle-racing documentary *Faster*, which sold some 20,000 DVDs via the filmmaker's website. That said, in order to navigate the variables associated with online distribution, one must have a broad knowledge of the terrain.

For Buice and Crumley, the podcasts have been about "building an audience," explains Crumley, who estimates they have more than 20,000 subscribers. "An audience is a valuable thing, and you don't necessarily have to cash in on it, but it definitely has value." (The duo hopes to start selling DVDs at some point for cash, but first wants to churn out another half-dozen or so podcasts.)

Broderick agrees that such audience-building is essential. "With those names and emails, you convert people from consumers of a product to supporters of an artist," he says. "If people have core audiences, they need to take the responsibility of how to let [them] know about the availability of the film through the internet."

With that, Broderick warns that selling off rights in today's day and age is an increasingly outdated concept. "Everyone should hold onto non-exclusive rights," he says. After all, no one knows better than the

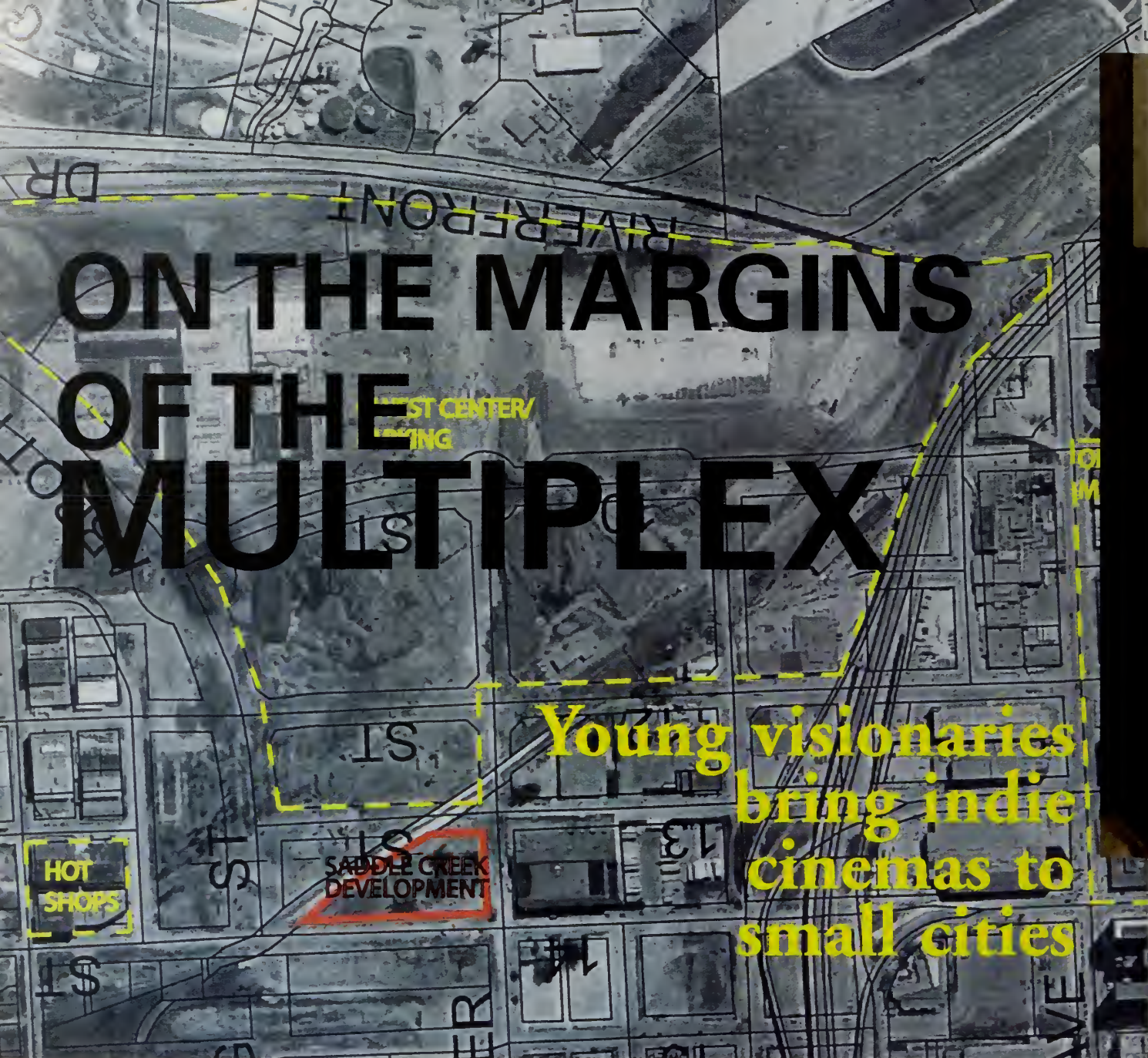
filmmaker who best to market her film to; and there's no easier way to spread the word than over the internet.

And selling via your own website, he adds, is not mutually exclusive with closing a deal with other retailers. "They know that harnessing the filmmaker is only going to benefit them," he adds.

In fact, many companies encourage filmmakers to have their own websites. IndieFlix, an online clearinghouse for no-budget pictures (which conspicuously features one top-selling film from the company's founders, Carlo Scanduzzi and Scilla Andreen), doesn't buy any rights but simply acts as a service for manufacturing, delivery, and community-building. "The filmmaker is the first line of PR," says Scanduzzi, who estimates their top-selling features, all priced at \$9.95, have sold roughly 500 copies. "With friends, family, and crew, it's very important that they bring in their community," he continues. "And if all these filmmakers bring in their communities it becomes one large community." Though as of March, the IndieFlix community, with barely 100 titles, was still relatively small, the duo claims that another 20 submissions arrive every month.

Like IndieFlix, IndiePix, another web-based DVD sales company, takes care of DVD authoring, boxing, and shipping. While IndieFlix gives the filmmaker one-third of the profits, filmmakers who distribute with IndiePix retain 70 percent of sales; neither company purchases rights. IndiePix President Bob Alexander says that given the company's promotional support, indies can see sales of roughly 1,000 units (about 10 percent of their 2,000 titles are indies without distributors attached).

Though wait a year and selling DVDs off a website will seem as old-fashioned as using a rotary phone. Recently, IndiePix launched a "Download to Own" program. For the first time, champions the company, movies can be download onto a DVD and played on a home entertainment system. Digital download rights, says Broderick, "will become more valuable, and they'll increasingly be another option for filmmakers." Bigger companies are already on the digital bandwagon, such as Starz' Vongo. And there are rumors that Apple's iTunes is developing a downloadable video movie store of thousands of feature films to supplement their limited catalogue of TV shows and music videos. Thus far, Netflix has eschewed the internet download model, but even Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandos says they'll eventually have to go there. ★



BY DANIELLE DIGIACOMO

In 1973, a young, cinema-loving bohemian couple fled the high rents of Manhattan for the more affordable suburbs of Huntington, NY. Once there, Vic Skolnick and Charlotte Sky found that they had also fled, inadvertently, the vibrant independent cinema scene in New York City, which was then in its heyday, with more than a dozen arthouses sprinkled throughout the boroughs. Without Netflix, or even (gasp!) home video, Skolnick and Sky were not content to suck it up at the local multiplex. So, in what is now legendary in the annals of independent film theatre history, they rented a few 16mm reels and a projector from the library, tacked a white bedsheet to a wall, passed out flyers, and invited fellow film lovers to a screening of Robert Rossen's *Lilith*, accompanied by the W.C. Fields' short, *The Fatal Glass of Beer*. Attendees were asked to bring their own chairs.

The Skolnick-Sky dilemma is not uncommon—jaded consumers become too full to enjoy the big city's cultural feast, and it's only when they move from uber-urbanity to a smaller city or the suburbs that they appreciate what they once had. This is especially true in film. Small towns and cities have been shortchanged cinematically, as if only the most cosmopolitan sophisticates can appreciate the non-big-budget blockbuster. As the Skolnicks continue to demonstrate, this is simply not the case.

Thirty-three years after hanging that bedsheet, this pioneering duo, along with their son Dylan, continue to run what is now known as the Cinema Arts Centre. With three screening rooms and two cafes, it is nationally renowned, attracting dozens of big-named filmmakers, actors, and critics. Their annual budget is \$1.8 million dollars, and they have over 8,000 members.



Group shot of The Film Streams Cinema Project, which is made up of (from left) Autumn Campbell, Pablo de Ocampo, and Jeremy Rossen

Huntington's Cinema Arts Centre, which now seems like a wizened old-timer in a tragically small family, has inspired a few small-town visionaries to follow its lead. More film fanatic than economically oriented entrepreneur, these intrepid young cinema-builders are trying to fill a cultural gap in the towns they love.

Film Streams

Rachel Jacobson, born and bred in Omaha, is a movie nerd—one of those list-making, spreadsheet-keeping, ticket-stub-saving fanatics. Her transformation from casual moviegoer to bona-fide cinemaniac occurred in 2000 while she was a senior at the University of Illinois. Courses in documentary film and French cinema opened her eyes to the potential of film as both a unique art and a social tool. Jacobson realized that, rather than make movies, she wanted to “promote film as an art form somehow.” While visiting her family during a break from school, she realized that “a true arthouse was something that has always really been missing from Omaha,” and she decided then and there to open one. First step: move to the Big Apple.

In New York, she adapted so well to the city's frenzied pace that her “outsider” origins were always met with surprise. Living in the East Village, the refreshingly open and stylish blonde with an infectious laugh created a social orbit with her many creative friends, connecting

a web of artists, filmmakers, and writers for social and collaborative purposes. Still, she didn't waiver in her plan to return home bearing a gift that would (hopefully) wield decades of perpetual returns. With her eye on the prize, Jacobson took a course in arts administration at New York University and took jobs in cinema and nonprofit arts—in distribution at Miramax, in fundraising at Theater for a New Audience, and finally, in individual giving and marketing at WNYC, New York's public radio station.

Jacobson kept in touch with an old Omaha friend, Robb Nansel, the head of a not-so-little indie label called Saddle Creek Records, which, together with its star musician, indie rock heartthrob Conor Oberst, helped put the city on the hipster map. Jacobson and Nansel used to brainstorm over beers about opening a cultural centre in Omaha, which would house both a concert venue and a nonprofit cinema. Jacobson considered this merely drunken dreaming until January 2005 when she got, as she put it, “the phone call that changed my life.” Unbeknownst to her, Nansel had been in talks with the City of Omaha, which agreed to give him space in a developing area of the city to build a concert hall and cinema as well as apartments, offices, a restaurant, and a retail store. All Jacobson had to do was move home and run the cinema.

The decision was a no-brainer. Jacobson immediately met with

lawyers to establish nonprofit status and, since permanently moving back, has worked manically to raise money and awareness, and to build a board of directors, which now includes Kurt Anderson, host of NPR's culture program "Studio 360," and acclaimed filmmaker Alexander Payne (*Sideways*, *Election*). She named the center Film Streams, a dual ode to her beloved city (Omaha means "above all else on a stream") and her favorite director, John Cassavetes, who directed *Love Streams*.

Film Streams has already collaborated with community groups to program a film series at the Joslyn Art Museum. Jacobson has curated a decidedly diverse schedule of movies, including Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, Bergman's *The Magic Flute*, and Jessica Yu's Henry Darger documentary, *In the Realms of the Unreal*. When the cinema is up and running (the projected opening date is Spring 2007) it will have a model similar to New York's Film Forum; a 208-seat theatre will project first-run indies, documentaries, and foreign films not playing elsewhere in the city, while a smaller, 99-seat room will be devoted to repertory series with guest speakers and community partners' involvement.

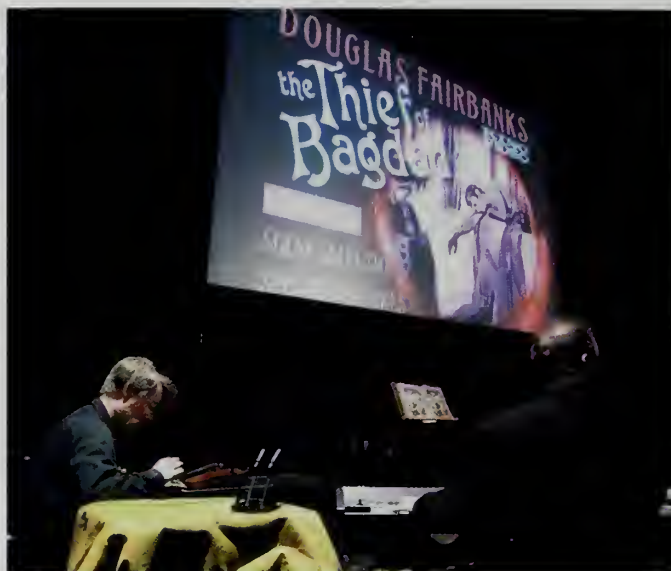
The Cinema Project

Even further from the megaplex is The Cinema Project, the self-proclaimed "micro-cinema" of Portland, Oregon that was formed in 2003 by filmmakers Jeremy Rossen, Autumn Campbell, and Pablo de Ocampo. In 2000, all three had moved from larger cities, where they found inspiration in the experimental and avant-garde, to Portland where they found, Rossen explains, that "there was a gap in the film community of screenings with this type of work. We all believe that in order to support the continued existence of film, it must be shown." The three formed a volunteer collective that was initially funded by local grants and organizations.

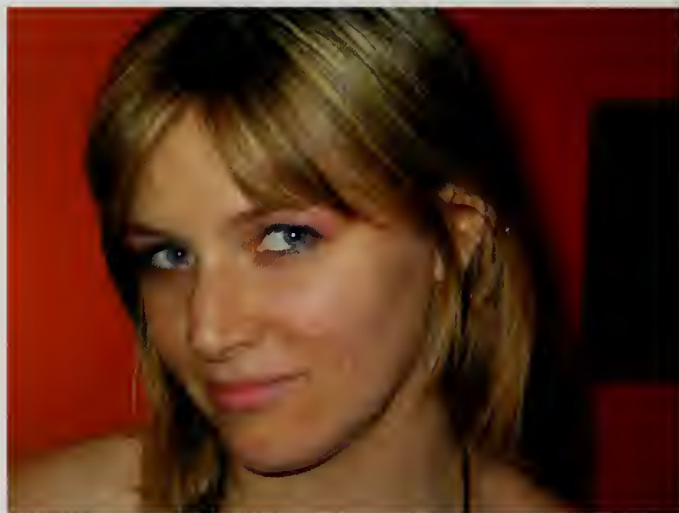
Without the funds to buy their own space, the collective has been mobile. The first few screenings were held at a black-box theater where they built their own projection booth. (The theater, however, was also used for punk shows, so when they set up a screening, they often found hung-over teens and the smell of stale beer.) When the space got sold and the collective evicted, they started screening at the New American Art Union, which had been recently opened by a friend. The space, though admittedly not built specifically for projecting films, proved to be suitable, and Cinema Project has been presenting programs there since early 2005.

Over the last three years, the Project has programmed two seasons a year, with an average of eight programs per season. Past programs have included films by Stan Brakhage, Chantal Ackerman, Robert Frank, Marguerite Duras, Yoko Ono, Trinh Minh-Ha, Lewis Klahr, Paul Chan, and Nathaniel Dorsky; the latter four of these appeared in person to discuss and present their work. A personal highlight for Rossen was fall 2005's complete Peter Kubelka retrospective, for which the 77-year-old, avant-garde legend traveled from Austria to present a food lecture along with his films.

Like Jacobson, the collective offers films not showing anywhere else in the city or in the entire Pacific Northwest for that matter. The three filmmakers share programming duties, which de Ocampo says helps the center have "a nice cross section of different styles and time periods represented." The founders independently choose films and then "meet up to strategize about a season together—is there enough historical work? Are we showing enough films by women or people of color? Do



Raoul Walsh's film played at Cinema Arts, accompanied by composer George Cork Maul and violinist A. Gabriel Kastelle.



Film Streams' Rachel Jacobson brings indie film to the heartland.

we have enough shows that are 'easy' on the audience? Is there a balance between formal work and content-based work?" On the whole, however, de Ocampo, who is partial to work by minority and foreign artists, admits, "I think we're all just looking for work that we like."

Because they don't have their own permanent theater, the trio has to work much harder than Jacobson to get the Project taken seriously. Being unprofessional is "a huge weakness with microcinemas, who might be programming amazing work but have sloppy projection with cheap projectors and slapped together theater space," says de Ocampo. He, Rossen, and Campbell make a concerted effort to buy good projectors that don't scratch the film prints, to know their equipment, and to make the presentation as professional as possible.

Box Office and Budgets

Even with their notably disparate undertakings, Film Streams and the Cinema Project share a mammoth, unending task—funding their cinemas. Cinema Project, with a volunteer staff, no monthly rent and only two seasons to program, had a 2005 budget of \$16,000. Jacobson

projects the expense of operating a seven-day-a-week theatre, with 28 percent going to compensation and 25 percent going to rent, will be \$570,000. Despite different budgets, the two share the same fundraising model, which Jacobson, channeling her nonprofit days, calls “diversified income streams based on a traditional nonprofit fundraising structure: corporate sponsorship, foundations, individual donors, special events, and membership.”

Box office will also add a notable chunk of income to Film Streams, which follows the Cinema Arts Centre model of, as Dylan Skolnick put it, “using the popular films to support the not-so-popular films.” He compares this method to that of directors such as Stephen Soderbergh, who alternate their bigger-budget Hollywood fare with shoestring budget labors of love. Ticket sales at the Cinema Project, which is dedicated to NOT showing popular work, hardly make a dent. “Showing the type of work that we do,” they note, “primarily 16mm films, is inherently expensive. Selling tickets at the door usually does not even begin to cover costs.”

Yet both theaters’ founders say the smaller cities bring certain advantages. Local pride creates a pool of willing contributors who, unlike New Yorkers, have expendable income not already depleted by or earmarked for other cultural institutions. Jacobson says support from entrepreneurs has been so enthusiastic because, “People are starting to get that in order to build an interesting city here, there needs to be a diverse array of cultural opportunities. Omaha’s a city on the cusp of urbanization, and businesses are looking for ways to attract smart, young people.” Film Streams, the city is realizing, is a way to not only keep the “creative class” in the city, but also to reel them in.

If You Build It, They Will Come

The Film Streams’ official mission statement states its aim is “to enhance the cultural environment of Omaha through the presentation and discussion of film as an art form,” while the Cinema Project asserts its goal is to “work to foster an informed viewing public that will support the wider circulation and critical appreciation of film and video art.”

Both are clearly kindred spirits of their Huntington, New York forebears, whose son Dylan points out that their cinema was initially called the New Community Cinema, stressing that the community connection is essential to the success of an independent cinema. Now that home theatre systems can be more impressive than public theatres, it is even more of a struggle to attract an audience. “People have so many more options now,” Dylan says. “Cable, DVDs, Netflix. You have to make [the theater] into an attractive experience, a night out that people enjoy.”

All three cinemas stress the importance of interactivity: dialogue, events, and education. Like Cinema Arts Centre, Film Streams will partner with schools to educate youth through and about film. Both theatres partner with community groups to curate their programs; the Cinema Arts Centre is the site of the Long Island Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, the Latino Film Festival, and an International Women’s Day Celebration, co-sponsored by the feminist action organization, Code Pink. And Jacobson, even during the budding stages of creating her organization, has partnered with the Omaha Public Library and the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, among others, to create event screenings. For Rossen of the Cinema Project, “Having the filmmaker

present to discuss their work in a small intimate format is an amazing experience that is often missing, and what sets us apart from some of the larger national organizations.”

That Film Streams, Cinema Project, and Cinema Arts Centre, all at different stages of growth, are all working nonstop to find funding and attract members shows just how difficult it is to create and maintain an independent cinema. Dylan Skolnick laments, not entirely unhappily, “in this business, it’s always a rough year.” But these courageous cinephiles who all believe that building not only a theater, but a community of people who socialize around the art of film, is worth the struggle, also have faith that if you build it, they will come. As the Cinema Project posse concurs, “We have always felt strongly that this type of work, though challenging and difficult at times, is often just not known; if you can find a way to get an audience to a show, even a small one, your audience will grow as you continue to show work.” ★

FIVE MORE CINEMAS HELPING SPREAD THE INDIE LOVE

Balagan Experimental Film and Video Series—Boston, Massachusetts

Created in 2000 by filmmakers Jeff Silva and Alla Kovgan, the Balagan presents experimental film and video works at Boston’s historic art deco Coolidge Corner Theatre.
www.coolidge.org/balagan/about.html

Aurora Picture Show—Houston, Texas

This award-winning theatre was started in 1998 by Houston-based media artists Andrea Grover and Patrick Walsh. In order to do so they transformed a dilapidated 1924 wooden church into a modern, 100-seat cinema.
www.aurorapictureshow.org

Mini-Cine—Schreveport, Louisiana

Formed in 2001, Mini-Cine “is a roving, pop-up suitcase, grocery cart, thrift store, hands on, volunteer-run venue for experimental and independent film and video located in Shreveport, Louisiana. Screening in galleries, coffee shops, or vacant buildings, Mini-cine strives to create an artist/audience interactive environment and welcomes filmmakers and multimedia visual artists to present new works.” www.swampland.org/minicine

Denver Film Society—Denver, Colorado

Founded in 1978, Denver Film Society’s structure is similar to that of Film Streams and the Cinema Arts Centre.
www.denverfilm.org

Sarasota Film Society—Sarasota, Florida

Another nonprofit cinema, the Sarasota Film Society is dedicated to partnering with community groups for educational outreach. www.filmsociety.org

Member of the Club: A New Orleans Chronicle captures the
Mardi Gras celebrations of the oldest and most vibrant city
— in both the white and African-American communities.



Bumps in the Road

Compromise in the new
world of documentary film

BY ANGELA MARTENEZ



PHOTO COURTESY OF ORIGINAL IMMORTAL CASE

As advances in digital technology make filmmaking more accessible than ever, it's tempting to believe that fewer technical obstacles means fewer compromises. For better or worse, it's not so simple. It seems, when life becomes easier in one respect—say with the one click it takes to upload onto GreenCine—it can also become more challenging in another—as in luring enough people in to see your one in a million documentary. Filmmakers are facing stiffer competition to attract funders, broadcasters, and distributors, which means they are making tougher choices about the tools and partnerships that will support their work—all of which involve compromise.

We took advantage of this dynamic moment in documentary history to speak with a range of documentary filmmakers—from emerging voices to esteemed pioneers, experimental essayists to three-act devotees—about the role that compromise has played in their careers. Is unfettered freedom *really* the Holy Grail of the documentary filmmaker? We found give-and-take can lead to unexpected discovery just as often as it brings unwelcome sacrifice. As Jacques Thelemaque, co-founder of Filmmaker's Alliance, a Los-Angeles-based collective with a focus on collaborative filmmaking, says, "You can't compromise until you know what essentially can't be compromised."

Jennie Livingston, director of *Paris Is Burning*, received partial funding from Netflix and The Sundance Channel for her current project, *Earth Camp One*, a personal documentary feature about losing four family members in five years. She attributes the funding she received in part to the recent success of personal documentaries like *My Architect* and *Tarnation*, as well as to the fact that docs are currently enjoying a "renewed moment of hotness." Though, in truth, her own refusal to compromise actually helped set the precedent for documentaries as bankable entertainment. Despite winning a Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, *Paris Is Burning* could not find a distributor. Rather than see years of hard work sit on the shelf, the film's creators acted on the conviction that there was an audience, both gay and straight, for their story, which led them to self-distribute at New York's Film Forum. The film became such a runaway hit that Miramax, which had initially passed on it, picked it up.

Still Livingston's tenacity did not guarantee that refusing to compromise one time would melt obstacles for good. "I thought because I'd 'done the impossible' once, people would assume I could do it again. That was a naïve assumption," she says. In fact, Livingston did have to compromise on *Who's The Top?*, which she made as a narrative short after years of trying to produce it as a feature.

Macky Alston recently completed his third documentary feature,

The Killer Within, about what happened when a man who committed a Columbine-type crime 50 years ago finally revealed the truth to the world. Alston knew he might not receive support from foundations to complete the project. But then when Discovery Docs, the theatrical arm of Discovery Channel, agreed to fund the film, he grew concerned about the impact of Discovery's support at this early stage of production. (Alston's previous partnerships with PBS and HBO were signed after or close to completion.) "I thought, 'What is my responsibility to my subjects who have trusted me with their very fragile lives at a very vulnerable time?' I'm saying 'Trust me,' but the 'me' is much larger than just me. And I don't have control over those who actually have control

over the product," he says. Alston talked to the story's principal family about his reservations over whether to risk the unknown. Because his protagonist originally signed on to the film because he saw it as an opportunity to bring greater awareness to issues around school violence, he agreed to take the risk. Ultimately, Alston says Discovery turned out to be "an incredible partner—incredible." Not only did the executives share the filmmaker's sense



Modern-day fairy tale: A little princess from Ferguson's *Member of the Club*

of ethical responsibility, but they expected the film to reflect his unique vision.

The compromise that comes with creating documentary television, explains award-winning filmmaker Alex Gibney, involves "fitting your vision into the mold of the cable company. Each show is a reflection of the network rather than of the creators." While PBS allows a lot of creative freedom, producers generally have to raise their own funds. Gibney, who directed *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, built a career over two decades, producing and directing documentary projects such as *The Blues* with Martin Scorsese for PBS, as well as nonfiction series for cable. Gibney learned the hard way that when creating a series for television, "if you don't fight for the integrity of your project, no one will." In one case he was asked to include commentary from a well-known television personality in a historical documentary series in the hopes that it would give the project a higher profile and hence help its marketing. However, he had no control over the content and, according to Gibney, it included inaccurate information that he believes undermined aspects of the series. "I wanted to be a good boy and make everyone happy. Independents have a reputation for being difficult individuals," he says. And while he regrets the decision, he acknowledges that picking your battles means weighing your resources against your clout. "It doesn't do any good to charge boldly into battle with two people behind you and the Wehrmacht army in front of you," he says.

More often than not, though, compromise, or the threat of it, can act as a catalyst moving the filmmaker to explore the complexities of his film. When Parvez Sharma began his first documentary feature, *In the*



Christina Ibarra sees compromise differently than she used to

Name of Allah, he traveled around the U.S. armed with a camera and a commitment to “take the discourse of Islam to its most unlikely storytellers,” namely, the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered Muslims who were capable of describing an Islam that didn’t emerge in either Eastern or Western media. Eventually he realized that in order to be a true agent of change, Sharma had to “go where the silence is strongest,” which led the documentary through eleven countries and nine languages. With producer Sandi Dubowski, director of *Trembling Before G-d*, Sharma secured partnerships with the UK’s Channel 4, France/Germany’s ZDF/Arte, Australia’s SBS, and MTV’s LOGO network. Having railed against big business in the past, this was a difficult decision for Sharma, an avowed guerrilla filmmaker. Ironically MTV has often been a lightning rod for the mullahs’ rhetoric against those in the West who “distort Islam.” “I thought I was making a compromise, but they know the importance of the film and are trying to create gay programming that is responsible and makes a difference,” Sharma says. Though this prospective compromise has turned out to be a positive one, Sharma, an Indian-born gay Muslim, recognizes that the subject matter of his film will always involve unique compromises. While he aims to shed light on queer Muslims and the shame that keeps them in the shadows, he is also committed to making a film within the boundaries of his faith, a film that will reveal an Islam beyond the oppressive, jihadist monolith that Westerners typically know. “I don’t need to produce images that Muslim families will not be comfortable with. It pushes you to create different kinds of visual imagery,” he says. Ultimately, Sharma credits this tension with highlighting the subtle layers of his film’s subject. As he puts it: “Challenge, compromise, choice—I function best with all those things around me, because it forces me to live that idea that the personal is political.”

Filmmaker Cristina Ibarra now defines compromise in a way that would have surprised her younger self. “When I first started, I thought film would be a way of speaking to my family, to my community. I was doing my work and thought as long as I was honest with myself, I shouldn’t let anyone influence or change my direction in any way,” she says. Eventually, after embarking on collaborative projects and being exposed to a range of filmmaking approaches, Ibarra expanded her original vision. “By compromising, you learn who you are, what your priorities are, what’s worth pursuing. It helps you grasp meaning out of your stories, helps you see complexities you wouldn’t have seen otherwise.” During the making of her current PBS documentary project, *The Last Conquistador*, she came to value the negotiation that a documen-

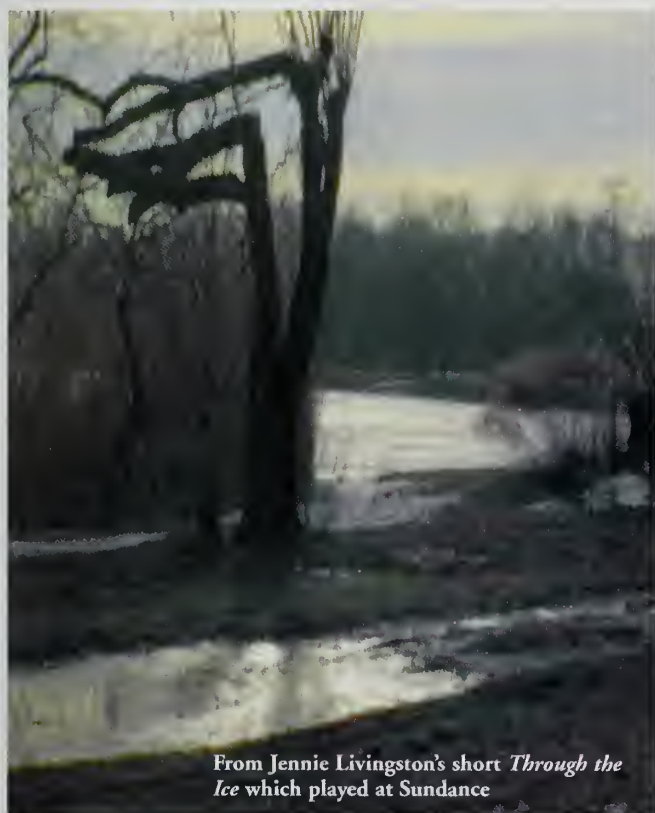
tary’s characters and themes often bring, introducing ideas that initially may feel compromising to the original ideas but are, in fact, just choices. The film follows the construction and impact of a colonial-era statue in a Texas border town and includes voices from Native American, Chicano, and Anglo community members. Their responses to the statue reflect a deeper tension between them. Although she thought she understood her subject from the get-go, the filmmaking has deepened Ibarra’s commitment to her audience, one that stretches beyond her early goals. “I don’t want to just talk to one person or one type of person, I want to reach everyone. It doesn’t mean that Latino or Chicano stories wouldn’t be interesting to someone somewhere else, but it’s about the human story now as opposed to setting things straight. Instead of searching for differences, I search for similarities.”

The mobility and low-overhead of a one-man band, with the director wearing most, if not all, hats, is appealing, though sometimes deceptively so. Phoebe Ferguson, a commercial photographer turned documentary filmmaker, is now editing her first feature, *Member of the Club: A New Orleans Cinderella Story*. While she can’t imagine working without the ease afforded by being essentially one woman with a digital video camera, this New Orleans native is skeptical of the “new” independence. “You feel so freed by it, that you can do things cheaper, and don’t need anything to do with a co-production company and other people. I haven’t really had to make compromises so far, but I’m not sure that’s a good thing. I yearned for more help. I may not have wanted it, but I would probably have learned more as a filmmaker. You never have to go through the front door of someone else’s office saying, ‘Would you be interested in this film?’” she says. Still Ferguson knows that the ease of access was a critical element in the birth of her passion for documentary filmmaking. And while she may not have had partnerships that forced her to compromise, she recognizes that a certain amount of compromise is an integral part of working with her subjects. “It’s all about the give and take. You push forward, and they push back. It’s very hard. You have to compromise the way you interact with people. You have to remember your role as a filmmaker.”

Barbara Hammer, a pioneer of lesbian feminist cinema, does the work of an entire production team—from research to shooting to editing—thanks to a willingness to “live simply” (including the good fortune of federally-subsidized artist housing), support from friends in the industry, interns, and her honed grant-writing skills. This independence has enabled Hammer to push the boundaries of experimental documentary and essay forms. She received funding from the NEA for her first feature, *Nitrate Kisses*, in 1992. The film explores images of lesbian and gay culture, including some sexually explicit homosexual scenes. At the time, the NEA was bending to pressure from conservatives, and the federal agency eventually flagged her file. Hammer set about making numerous prints of the film so that by the time she received the call a year later to remove the agency’s name from the credits, she had proof that this venerable institution had once supported experimental work. Her latest documentary, *Lover Other*, which premiered at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, is about two lesbian surrealist artists who never made it into the history books. The non-linear film uses multiple screens, a collage of interviews, and lyrical interludes. When asked whether she considers the limited number of venues willing or able to screen such work a compromise, she gently explains, “It’s not me that’s making the compromise.”



Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore in a 1929 period still from *Lover Other*

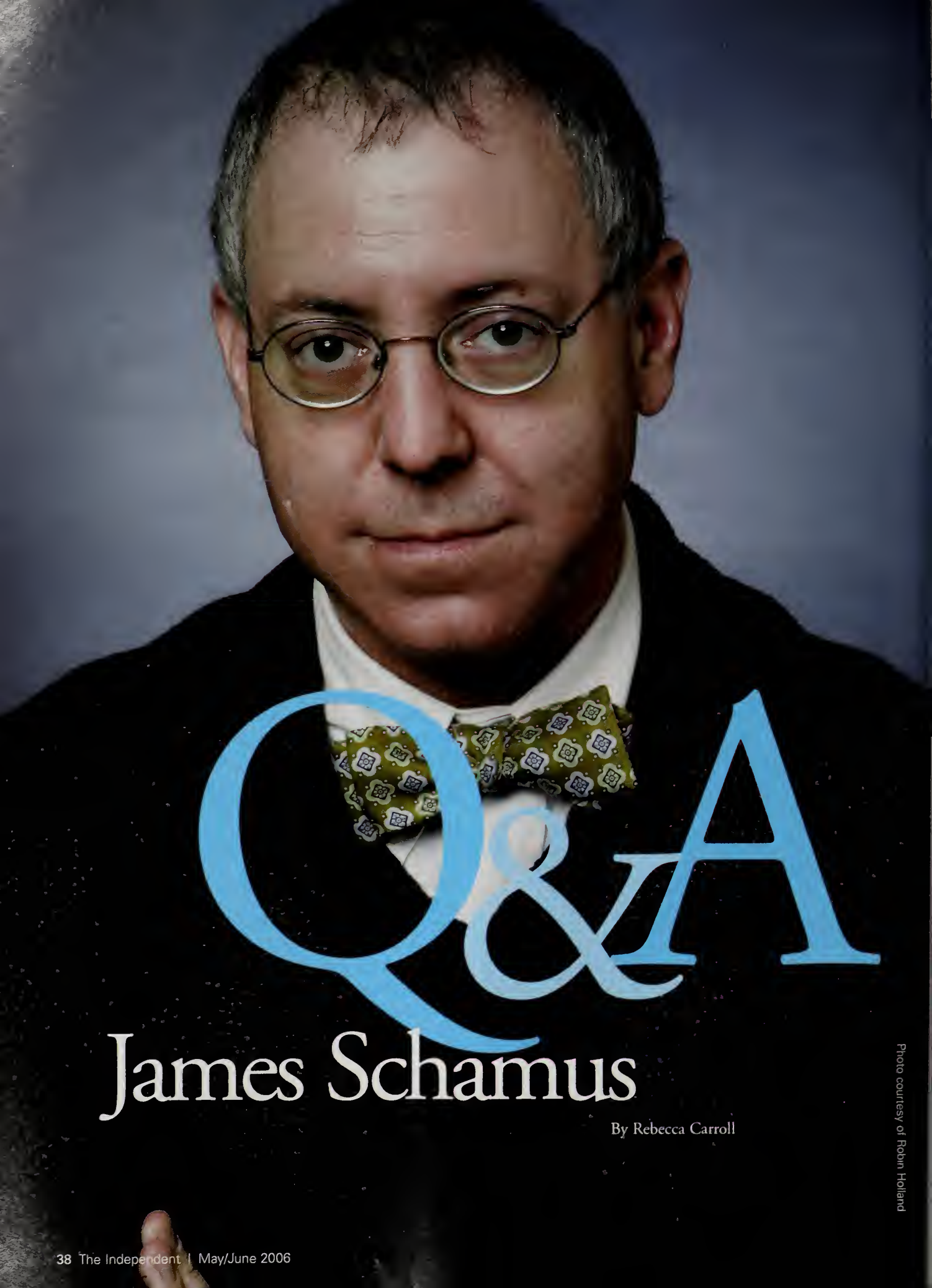


From Jennie Livingston's short *Through the Ice* which played at Sundance

This bold, exploratory, multi-tasking approach has also shaped the poignant and singular work of Alan Berliner. For 30 years, Berliner has produced, directed, edited, written, and often shot his own genre of experimental, essay, first-person documentary films. He recently finished a feature called *Wide Awake*, a first-person exploration of insomnia, which the filmmaker credits with feeding his work. Berliner admits the solo strategy has required discipline and perseverance as well as strik-

ing a balance between the business, creative, and planning sides. "All these different parts of the process, and parts of me, have learned to compromise with one another all the time. I don't think I could do the work that I do if I couldn't negotiate with myself." Indeed this inner mediation represents a contract with his audience. "There's a part of me that wants each film to be very idiosyncratic and have experimental edges and take formal chances. There's another part that also wants to make sure that my mother understands the film and my mother's neighbors. That's a profound negotiation. It's a balance: To satisfy a deep need, the story has to be dynamic in such a way so people will recognize themselves. These are all key words: negotiation, balance, letting go," he says. While Berliner has been approached by Hollywood, he has never been tempted to follow the money. "I wouldn't have the same sense of authorship," he says. "Every film, I make I'm pushing boundaries and buttons so I know that I'm also defending the landscape of personal filmmaking. It's not easy to do, and it's not easy to fund. It's a contradiction: Even if while I'm making it I want to know that it will be relevant to as many people as possible, I also have to be honest that it won't be. It's about recognizing what your limitations are. But that doesn't mean you stay safe. Ideally what you want is someone to say I can tell it was your film, but you took some chances."

Regrets about roads not taken, sleepless nights spent wondering whether a battle was worth the picking (or sleepless nights picking battles with oneself), second-guessing—all these are not just bumps in the road, but the very landscape most filmmakers describe as a vital part of the journey to becoming a filmmaker. Most of these filmmakers say they wouldn't expect to work, nor would they even prefer to work, without compromise, it being a key element of the collaboration which most consider to be vital to the filmmaking process. "I chose to be an artist to make my own choices," Hammer says. "It's a more risk-taking way to live. I don't want to eat at the best restaurants. I want to live in the world of exploration." ★



Q&A

James Schamus

By Rebecca Carroll

Photo courtesy of Robin Holland

Writer, producer, and film executive James Schamus has had about as brilliant a career in independent film as they come, and it just keeps getting better. The films he has worked on read like a list of the only films that really matter in the modern trajectory of independent cinema: *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), *The Brothers McMullen* (1995), *Safe* (1995), *Walking and Talking* (1996), *The Ice Storm* (1997), *Happiness* (1998), and the list goes on. His working relationship with director Ang Lee is well-documented, and the two have worked on nine films together, including the recent phenomenon that is *Brokeback Mountain*.

I spoke to Schamus the day before he left for Los Angeles to attend this year's Academy Awards. In a surprise upset, *Brokeback* lost out to *Crash*, a montage drama about race issues in Los Angeles, for Best Picture. The film did, however, go home with Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay awards.

Rebecca Carroll: It's a big year for independent film—what's your position on the 'indie heavy' Oscars this year, which includes, of course, several nominations for your film, *Brokeback Mountain*?

James Schamus: I think that the historical horizon through which we interpret these moments is pretty limited. We look back to the late '80s and early '90s and think that's when [independent film] started, and we always frame it in this independent versus studio kind of way. But quite frankly, a more appropriate horizon—one among many—would be the late '60s, early '70s when United Artists had movies like *Midnight Cowboy*, which was an X-rated gay movie that won Best Picture. So what's so new about *Brokeback Mountain*?

RC: Right. I was really struck by a comment that I read in an article somewhere. You said that if people have a problem with *Brokeback* or the relationship portrayed in it, that's really their problem and that you 'really, truly don't care.' That comment and others made it seem to me like you knew this film was going to be big—how did you know?

JS: Well, you don't know. You never know. But you do have to do two things. As a busi-

nessperson, you have to plan for the worst. But at the same time, you have to create structures that allow for the best. You have to seize opportunities and create conditions under which those opportunities can be seized. So that means you have to be able to at least imagine a happy future and then work towards that.

RC: And how does that strategy work with *Brokeback*?

JS: In many ways, the film is a very old-fashioned movie, and it maintains old-fashioned virtues—a lack of cynicism and a real commitment to the romance of the story. Of the movies out this year, *Brokeback* is probably one of the most 'old Hollywood' of them all, which of course makes it look totally revolutionary and new.

RC: How do you choose the films you work on—what appeals to you or attracts you to a project?

JS: In general, the initial attraction is not to a film but to a filmmaker. What we [at Focus Features] always try to do is to make movies and, sorry to trot out the chestnut here, but it is true, that if it is a movie we're going to make, it is a movie that can only be made by one particular filmmaker. It has to be that person's film, not a generic product. So we're always looking for films that have a signature to them.

RC: Not films that other people aren't making, but films that only a particular filmmaker can make—can you elaborate on that a little more?

JS: Sure. You listen to the radio, and you hear pop songs and it could be any number of mass-produced teenyboppers singing them, but when you hear Nina Simone or Bob Dylan sing, you know it's them. We think of our films in very much the same way—they are the product of individual voices, not of a production line.

RC: Got it. And your relationship with Ang Lee? How did that start?

JS: Back in the day when Ted Hope and I had just started Good Machine, Ted had seen Ang's short film *Fine Line*. He shared it with

The Film Division of Columbia University congratulates Professor **James Schamus**, longtime faculty member, Producer of ***Brokeback Mountain***, and Co-President of Focus Features, for a spectacular year of independent filmmaking at its best.

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me, and we both said, 'Wow, what is this guy doing?' It had been five years since he'd made *Fine Line* at NYU, and he'd just won some money for a screenplay award in Taiwan. So we were able to hook up with him and help him make his first feature, *Pushing Hands*.

RC: What a great relationship that has been, right?

JS: Yeah, I'll say. I've done all right.

RC: I'm going to throw out the titles of some of your films and you tell me the first thing that comes to mind—starting with *Walking and Talking*.

JS: I'm terrible at these kinds of games, but looking back at the incredible intersection of talents in that movie [Catherine Keener, who was nominated for an Academy Award this year for her role in *Capote*, Anne Heche, Liev Schreiber, and Todd Field, who went on to direct the critically acclaimed *In the Bedroom*], it's pretty amazing. I guess the word that comes to mind for that film is nostalgia.

RC: *The Wedding Banquet*.

JS: It's funny, I thought that *The Wedding Banquet* would be the film that people would be talking about this year with *Brokeback*, and there's been so little reference to it, I've actually been quite surprised by that.

RC: Do you think it's because the story of *Brokeback* has gotten lost in the flurry of press and hype and Oscar excitement?

JS: On a certain level, who cares? But I think [*The Wedding Banquet*] is just not a frame of reference for what's happening with *Brokeback*, for any number of reasons, but one is because the framing of *Brokeback* is about the mainstream and what's happening across the country. A foreign language movie that did quite well on the arthouse circuit a decade ago is just not a reference point.

RC: How is *Brokeback Mountain* special for you?

JS: Not to sound like a complete idiot, but this is the nicest movie we've ever had to make. From the crew to the shoot—everyone

Focus Features' *Brokeback Mountain*, though denied Best Picture, achieved massive play for an indie film in 2006



“Of the movies out this year, *Brokeback* is probably one of the most ‘old Hollywood’ of them all, which of course makes it look totally revolutionary and new.”

and everything—the whole experience was simply pleasant, which doesn't necessarily mean you're going to make a good movie. You can have a very pleasant experience making a very lousy movie. But it's the ninth film I've worked on with Ang, and we've both looked at each other and said, 'Wow, this is just more fun than ever.'

RC: A good time, yeah—you got on 'Oprah.' That's kind of crazy, isn't it?

JS: It is. It's amazing.

RC: Another film, *Happiness*.

JS: *Happiness* is a real landmark movie, especially for us [at Good Machine] as a company, because we ended up distributing it, and I really got very excited and interested with that aspect of the business through that experience. But more importantly, that film marked a particular moment in terms of the growth and maturity of American independent cinema.

RC: The films you've worked on all seem to have really strong writing in common—how hard is it to find a great script in this industry?

JS: It's hard. We focus on directors, the kind of auteur aspect, but none of that is possible unless there's a screenplay. And good screenwriters, especially on the independent

side, tend to also be the directors. Because if you're going to devote yourself to the craft of screenwriting, you're really writing a movie that only one or two people can direct, and that reduces your odds quite phenomenally.

RC: What aspect of filmmaking do you like best?

JS: The good news is that I'm just lucky, because I have such variety in what I do. If I was writing all day long, I'd go stir crazy. If I was a producer all day long, my A.D.D. would take over. And if I was running a studio all day long, I'd start wearing suits.

RC: You don't ever feel discombobulated?

JS: Stretched, yes, but not discombobulated. It's all working toward the same goal, which is getting movies made that we like.

RC: And there's no end in sight for great movies to be made. Whose work do you admire, and who might you like to work with in the future, or do you not think in those terms?

JS: Yeah, I don't really think in those terms. I think this has been an incredible year for American cinema—the kind of independent or specialized films that are still working inside the coats and conventions of mainstream idioms.

RC: What do you think that says about our culture right now? And what might the fallout be?

JS: These things, these moments, come and go—you can talk about them cyclically, although I don't know if that's the right way to speak about them. I do think there is a political side to this, frankly. It was two years ago that Bush got reelected, and I think people finally woke up and started making movies about that anxiety.

RC: And anxiety is an element that makes for good films, right?

JS: I think so, yes.

RC: When you're reading through a script, or hearing a synopsis or an opinion of a script, what do you wait for—what makes you think, 'OK, this is a movie.'

JS: Even if you hear a negative opinion about something, you might hear one element that touches your imagination. It could be the context, a character—it's that one thing, and you just never know what it will be. ★

The awards ceremony at Berlinale

Festival
Circuit



Dispatch from The Berlinale Talent Campus

By Claus Mueller

Helmed by Dieter Kosslick, the man who transformed the NRW (North Rhine-Westphalia, the biggest German state) film foundation into the second largest public production co-funder in Europe, the 2006 Berlinale featured over 360 films in 13 sections. It included films from the Forum and the Teddy retrospective of queer cinema, as well as around 650 films in the European Film Market. There were 3,800 journalists among the 19,000 accredited participants. Sales of film festival tickets exceeded \$150,000. All just evidence that The Berlin International Film

Festival is now one of the largest and most important film festivals in the world.

Although Berlinale's recent popularity is due in part to the demise of MIFED, the International Film and Multimedia Market, and to the rescheduling of the American Film Market to November, there's no question that the addition of new interactive components—the Talent Campus, the World Cinema Fund, and the Co-Production Market, where publishers pitch their properties to producers—have helped propel its success.

Many would argue that the most impor-

tant of these new programs is the weeklong Berlinale Talent Campus for gifted young filmmakers from all over the world. Kosslick established the Talent Campus in 2003, and it has since become a model for short-term, intensive, expert training emulated by film festivals in the Ukraine, South Africa and India. Its uniquely large scale is due to Kosslick's funding skills. Volkswagen, the UK Film Council, the regional Media Board Berlin Brandenburg, and numerous other companies provided cash and in-kind support amounting to nearly \$2 million, with a hefty proportion

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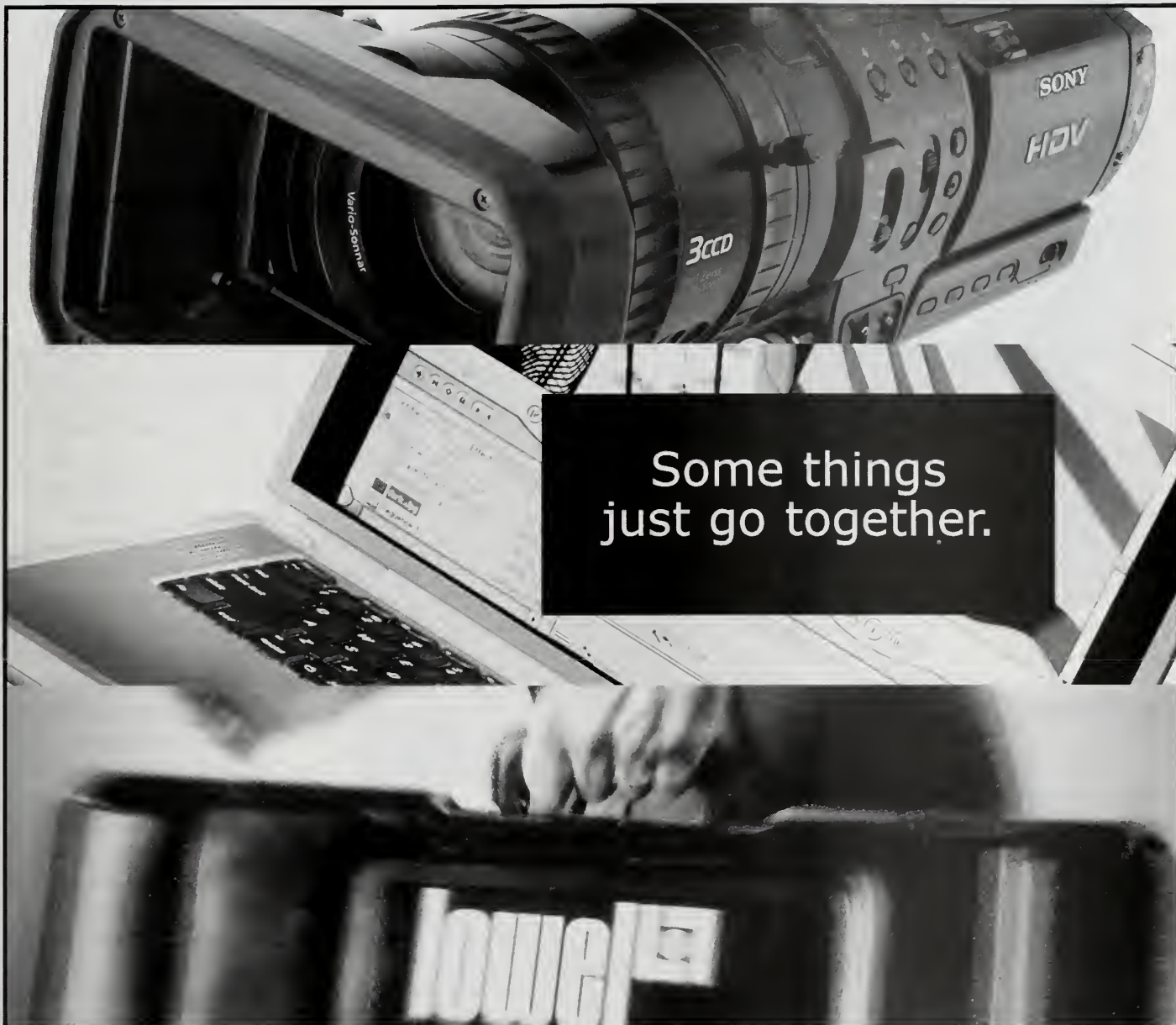
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devoted to subsidizing transportation and lodging for the participants.

This year, 3,516 filmmakers from 121 countries applied, and just 520 made it past the stiff competition. The winners identified their fields of work as directing (40 percent), screenwriting (21 percent) and editing (11 percent); the remainder had backgrounds in cinematography, production, sound design, and acting. In keeping with the international philosophy of the organizers, a large proportion, 207 participants to be exact, came from developing countries and Eastern Europe. The largest contingents originated in Germany (56), the UK (35), the USA (29), France (20), and Spain (20), with developing countries prominently represented by Mexico (13), India (12), Columbia (10), Brazil (8), Argentina (7), and Serbia/Montenegro (7), as well as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Egypt, and Vietnam.

Campus participants, lodged in hostels near the cavernous Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures) where many events were held, could choose from 80 lectures, seminars, on-hand demonstrations, and a never-ending slew of socials to attend. Lecturers included editors Jim Clark (*Vera Drake*, 2004) and Angie Lam (*House of Flying Daggers*, 2004), and visiting VIPS included Charlotte Rampling who was the president of the Berlinale jury, Wim Wenders, Andres Veiel, Park Chan-Wook, Sabine Krayenbuel (editor, *Mad Hot Ballroom*, 2005), Stephen Warbeck (composer, *Shakespeare in Love*, 1998) and the cinematographers Anthony Dod Mantle (*Dogville*, 2003) and Christopher Doyle (*2046*, 2004).

This year's overarching theme at Talent Campus was "Films on Hunger, Food and Taste" and each day a specific area of filmmaking was covered. For example, the pre-production day featured an AVID editing workshop; a discussion of visual styles with Mantle and Doyle; the UK Film Council's "Film Finance Workout" with Paul Trijbits; production design with Alissa Kolbusch and Johannes Sternagel; and Christoph Terhechte's interview with Park Chan-Wook. Afternoon events and seminars included filming with Canon equipment;



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Colin Farrell discovers *The New World*



Bester Erstlings in triumph at Berlinale 2006

the impact of taste on films; perspectives in student films, casting and maximizing distribution; risk-taking by independents; analysis of dramaturgical scripts; screening and discussion of *Alice Waters and her Delicious Revolution*.

Campus participants also had the opportunity to work on several collaborative projects. For the Talent Campus they were given press passes and told to interview prominent filmmakers at the Berlinale. A dozen talents were given the opportunity to submit their documentary script to a Doc Clinic for review by industry professionals. In the Script Clinic, 15 screenwriters were attached to five mentors. Almost 400 of this year's participants applied for the Talent Movie of the Week, which gave them two weeks (they arrived a week early) to produce a digital short, which was presented on the last day of the Talent Campus. This year's winner was *High Maintenance* by Simon Biggs (UK) and Phillip Van (U.S.). Other awards open to Campus participants include the Volkswagen Score competition, Robert Bosch Stiftung's prize for three joint film productions, and the Berlin Today Award—cash and services valued at about \$100,000 to produce a short film that is related to Berlin. Last year 182 proposals were submitted and three projects were selected and produced. The winner was *Berlinball* by Brazil's Anna Azevedo. Another opportunity is the Talent Project Market, which allows for 17 filmmakers to participate in the Berlinale's Co-Production Market and, after a rigorous one-day training session, to pitch their projects to producers and financiers. Two 2004 projects received production funding and wound up selections for the Forum and Panorama sections of the 2006 Berlinale. Kosslick says the Talent Campus equals constant "Frischzellentherapie" (virgin cell therapy) for the Berlinale. There have been close to 2,000 Talent Campus graduates so far, and productions by 24 grads were selected for the 2005 Berlinale.

Most participants claimed the Talent Campus met their expectations. Then again it's hard to complain about free

travel to and lodging in the politically and artistically rich capital of Germany. Rostam Persson, a 21-year-old director from Upsala, Sweden, whose "aim in life is to make the best rock videos and films" was happy with the networking he did, and said some panels, such as the producing panel with Iain Smith, were outstanding, though others were below average. The worst part for Persson? All that German cigarette-smoke in closed public spaces and during social functions. Brooklyn-based director and screenwriter Neel Scott echoed popular sentiment when he complained that the Talent Campus had simply grown too large for sufficient discussion in seminars. Scott, however, came to the Campus for "exposure to a variety of narrative and aesthetic point of views" and to "learn how to work in the industry." Both goals were accomplished, he says, through viewing films at the Berlinale's Forum and Panorama sections, attending seminars with Christopher Doyle and Wim Wenders, and frequent visits to the European Film Market. Ultimately, it seems, access to many Berlinale events was easier for the Talent Campus participants than for professionals with expensive industry badges.

Selection for the Talent Campus is an award in itself. Talent Campus staff identify "creative originality" as the most important determining factor for admittance and note that most applicants from the U.S. already have an impressive resume of awards, completed productions, and screenings of their work at established film festivals. Since both the U.S. and Europe offer extensive schooling for filmmakers, the Campus needs to continue to focus on its real value: training filmmakers from less-advanced countries. ★

The deadline for the 2007 Talent Campus is November 1, 2006. Applications will be available on July 1, 2006 at www.berlinale-talentcampus.de.

Tools You Can Use

New cameras, software, and other goodies for independent filmmakers (and Afford)

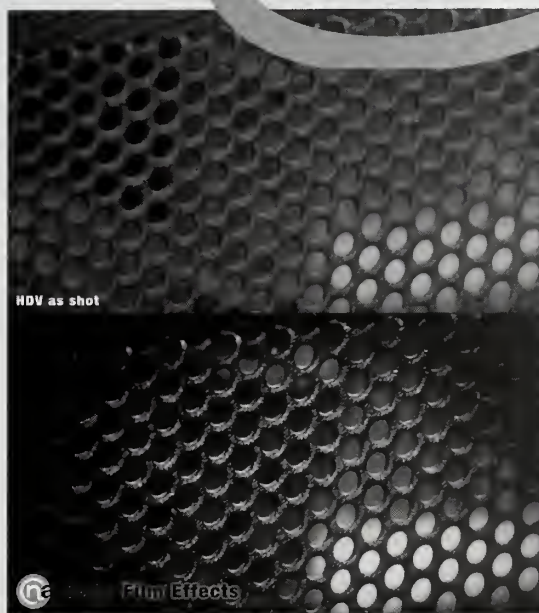
By Mike Curtis

Cameras

In addition to the sub \$10,000 HD camcorders already on the market (the Panasonic AG-HVX200, the Canon XL H1, the Sony HVR-Z1U, and the JVC GY-HD100U), there are now some mid-priced brethren with capabilities closer to the traditional high-end solutions, which can run \$60,000 to \$100,000.

Sony previously created a low-end HD for sub \$5000 HD camcorders that use HDV with their HDR-FX1, HVR-Z1U, and lower end HDR-A1U and HDR-HC3. Now they are filling in the professional middle ground with XDCAM HD, which doesn't need tape (it uses Blu-ray based discs) and records at three different quality levels for MPEG-2 based 1080i and 1080p. The lensless camera bodies, which go for \$17,000 or \$25,800, are perfect for indie filmmakers who are using the highest quality, 35-megabit VBR (variable bitrate) in 1080p24 mode (1920x1080 at 24 progressive frames per second). Assuming the XDCAM HD lives up to its expectations, its imaging chips (better than the 1/3-inch used by the low-end), over/undercrank capabilities, serious glass, and audio capabilities promise a beautiful camera for the mid-price range.

Sony has also updated their high-end



Film Effects in action above and below



digital cinema camera. The venerable HDW-F900 is being replaced with the HDW-F900R, which has a new smaller chassis and built in HD-SDI. The camera lists for \$80,000 (down from \$105,000—more bang, less bucks). And Panasonic is continuing to expand their

720p/1080i offerings with P2 solid state memory cards beyond the AG-HVX200 with their new AJ-HPC2000 camcorder that records to P2 as well as hard drive. It is expected to ship later this year for under \$30,000. Think of it as a tapeless Varicam.

One new and affordable non-HD camcorder is the Panasonic SDX-900 which has recently dropped its price from \$26,500 to \$16,500 list. It is often referred to as the poor man's Digibeta with 2/3-inch imaging chips (that's big, and that's good) that also does 24p and 16:9 (great for indie moviemakers). The DVCPRO50 format's 4:2:2 color sampling (which means twice as much color information is recorded to tape compared to an HDV or DV camera) make it an excellent choice for projects when maximum dynamic range is required.

But how do you edit this 24p HDV with your nonlinear editing system? Sony's Vegas 6 now claims support for 24p and HDV, and Lumiere HD enables Final Cut Pro editors to work with 24p HDV.

And though it can't edit 24p HDV (as of this writing), Final Cut Studio for Intel-based Macs was released in March, so minis will be ready to edit with an Intel Duo Core chip for under \$800, or with iMacs, which have a similar but speedier processor starting under

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\$1300, or with a MacBook Pro starting at \$2000. Any of these (properly upgraded of course) could be a good low-budget, light-editing system for all FireWire-based tape formats. DV/DVCAM/DVCPRO, DVCPRO50, HDV, and DVCPRO HD could all be captured and edited at full quality with these systems, and there is now a low-cost crossgrade for all of the folks that only own a part of the Final Cut Studio or Production Bundle.

Software

VideoSpace is another very cool (and free!) tool new this that month allows you to find out how much drive space you will need for a given video project. The great little Mac OS X widget (for OS X 10.4 and higher) from Digital Heaven (digitalheaven.co.uk) gives you handy pop-ups that detail media format (DV, HDV, uncompressed, SD, HD, etc.), frame rate, time, and drive space. VideoSpace can calculate time from megabytes and vice versa. I keep it on my laptop so when a client asks how much space they'll need for editing or postproduction, I can answer in seconds... and



LumiereHD (above) Canon XLH1 (left)

look super-smart at the same time. (Even if the post process involves finishing with another codec, frame rate, or format, it never hurts to look good in front of a client.)

Instant HD from the creators of Magic Bullet is a plugin to up-rez SD to HD on an HD timeline—great for when you need to mix standard and high definition video on the same timeline. Video gurus have learned that DV captured over SDI looks better than video captured over FireWire. Not everyone knows, however, the reason for this—color sampling and color aliasing. Now there are plugins such as those from Nattress that will do chroma smoothing to make your FireWire-captured footage look better. They can also perform other useful tricks to make your video look its best, like deinterlacing, format conversions (PAL/NTSC/24p). Several packages are available and all are less than \$100.

Other Goodies

After P+S Technik got everyone excited about the ability to create a shallow depth of field with a DV camera and their Mini35 product, the new Letus 35 is a low-cost (\$300) adaptor that uses 35mm lenses on a DV camera such as the XL1 or DVX100. It may not live up to the quality needs of every project, but it's incredibly affordable.

More information about these products and others can be found on Mike Curtis' website www.HDforIndies.com.

FESTIVALS

By Marshall Crook

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@avt.org.

ACTION/CUT SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, CA. Deadline: March 15; May 15 (final). Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: \$35,000 in cash & services. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$40-\$85. Contact: Action/ Cut Filmmaking Seminars; filmmaking@actioncut.com; www.actioncut.com.

FIRST SUNDAYS COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL Deadline: ongoing. A monthly festival featuring the best in comedy and short film/digi/animation followed by an after-screening networking event. An ongoing festival held the first Sunday of each month at the Pioneer Theater in New York, First Sundays is the premiere opportunity to showcase work and meet talented directors and other indie dv/film folk. Cats: short (under 20 min.), comedy, animation/dv/film. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: (email) film@chicagocitylimits.com or (website) www.firstsundays.com.

HOT SPRINGS DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 20-29, AR. Deadline: April 7; May 19 (final). Annual fest accepting nonfiction film submissions for one of the country's premier nonfiction film celebrations. Noncompetitive fest honors films & filmmakers each yr. in beautiful Hot Springs Nat'l Park, Arkansas. More than 85 films are screened, incl. the current year's Academy Award nominees in nonfiction cats. Special guest scholars, filmmakers & celebrities participate in forums & lectures. Founded: 1992. Cats: doc, short, feature. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", DVD, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$55. Contact: Darla Dixon, HSDFI; (501) 321-4747; fax: (501) 321-0211; ddixon@sdfi.org; www.hsdfi.org.

IFP MARKET, Sept. 17-21, NY. Deadline: May 1: Rolling deadlines begin. Annual event is the longest-running U.S. market devoted to new, emerging film talent. The market presents new film & TV

works in development directly to the industry. Hundreds of financiers, distributors, buyers, development execs, fest programmers, & agents from the U.S. & abroad attend the IFP Market. Market filmmakers receive access to these industry executives via targeted networking meetings, pitch sessions, screenings, & more. Cats: feature, doc, work-in-progress, short, script. Awards: More than \$150,000 in cash & prizes awarded to emerging artists, incl. two \$10,000 Gordon Parks Awards for Emerging African-American filmmakers. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40-\$50 application fee; Registration fees (paid on acceptance only): \$200 - \$450. Contact: Pooja Kohli; (212) 465-8200; fax: 465-8525; marketreg@ifp.org; www.ifp.org/market28.

KANSAS CITY GAY & LESBIAN FILM + VIDEO FESTIVAL, July 20-27, MO. Deadline: See Website. Largest LGBT

film fest in the Midwest accepts films/videos of all types & lengths. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: Shorts: \$15, \$25 (final); features: \$25, \$35 (final). Contact: Festival; 816-931-0738; lisaevans@kcgayfilmfest.org; www.kcgayfilmfest.org.

KANSAS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 15-21, KS. Deadline: March 31; April 30; May 30 (final). The fest is a celebration of independent cinema & features a Think! series of socially conscious documentaries, experimental works, foreign films, & American indies. All films screen in beautifully restored theatres operated by the Fine Arts Theatre Group in the Greater Kansas City area. The Lucid Underground Short Film competition curated w/ a 'punk tenacity' also screens during KIFF. Cats: doc, feature, short, experimental. Awards: Audience awards; \$250 cash prizes in each category. Formats: 35mm, DV Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$40 (final). Contact: Dotty Hamilton; (816) 501-3646; info@kansasfilm.com, lucidunderground.com; www.kansasfilm.com.

MADCAT WOMEN'S INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, September, CA. Deadline: March 24; May 15 (final). The 10th Annual MadCat Film Festival seeks provocative & visionary films & videos directed or co-directed by women. Films can be of any length or genre & produced ANY year. MadCat is committed to showcasing work that challenges the use of sound & image & explores notions of visual story telling. All subjects/topics will be considered. Founded: 1996. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, Beta SP, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$30 (sliding scale, pay what you can afford). Contact: Festival; (415) 436-9523; fax: 934-0642; info@madcatfilmfestival.org; www.madcatfilmfestival.org.

MILWAUKEE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 19-29, WI. Deadline: TBA. Cats:

feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, Mini-DV, Beta SP. Entry Fee: \$10-\$70. Contact: Festival; (414) 225-9740; program@milwaukeekeefilmfest.org; www.milwaukeekeefilmfest.org.

NAPA SONOMA WINE COUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL, July - August 2006, dates TBD. Deadline, May 15, 2006 (final). Accepting shorts, documentaries and feature films. Festival features several competitions in numerous categories, outdoor screenings, a pleasant environment, and plenty of wine! Awards include Best First Feature Prizes (domestic and international), Best Short in various categories, David L. Wolper Documentary Film Prizes and Audience Choice Awards. Also Special Awards include the Jack London Screenplay Award, WCFF Humanitarian Award and the Margrit and Robert Mondavi Film Prize for Peace and Cultural Understanding. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DV and video. VHS, DVD or DV Cam for preview. NTSC preferred, but PAL previews acceptable. Contact: Napa Sonoma Wine Country Film Festival T: 707-935.FILM F: 707-996.6964. Address: 12000 Henno Road P.O. Box 303 Glen Ellen, CA 95442; wcfilmfest@aol.com www.winecountryfilmfest.com/.

NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL-From the NOFF website: "Unlike many film fests, we bring films to the New Orleans market that would not ordinarily be screened here. The fest also provides video mentoring sessions & industry panels for local filmmakers. In spite of our losses due to Hurricane Katrina, we are determined to resume programming in the near future. Our staff will continue to work w/out pay, & our board members are volunteering their time & efforts. We plan to present an abbreviated 2005 fest in early 2006, & w/ your help, we will present a full fest in the fall of 2006" See website to make a donation. Annual fest features premieres, classic film retros, panel dis-

cussions & gala events. Entries of all lengths & genres, incl. music videos, welcome. Entries must be completed after Jan. of previous year. Founded: 1990. Cats: Any style or genre, Animation, Doc, Experimental, Short, Feature, Student, Music Video. Awards: Awards based on jury selection, given in each genre, Grand Jury Prize, & Louisiana Filmmaker Prize. Formats: 1/2", 35mm (by invitation only), Beta, 35mm, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40; \$45 (final). Contact: Elisa Gallinot; (504) 523-3818; fax: 782-5792; incompetition@neworleansfilmfest.com; www.neworleansfilmfest.com.

PORT TOWNSEND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 15-17, WA. Deadline: TBA/See Website. Festival aims to showcase independent filmmakers & films to provide creative activity for the public along w/ periodic classes & seminars. The emphasis is on providing a creative experience & promoting films. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Awards: Cash awards for Best Narrative Feature (\$2500), Best Doc Feature (\$2500), Best Short (\$750), Best Doc Short (\$750). Also Audience Favorite Award. Formats: S-VHS, Beta SP, 35mm. Preview on VHS (PAL, NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15-\$45. Contact: PTFf; (360) 379-1333; fax: 379-3996; info@ptfilmfest.com; www.ptfilmfest.com.

RHODE ISLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, August 8-13, 2006. Main Deadlines: May 15 2006/ June 1, 2006/ June 15, 2006 (final). A broadly focused New England festival that accepts all types (dramatic, docs, animation), subject matter, and genre. Recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as a qualifying festival for the Short Films Category for the Academy Awards. Festival aims to highlight significant achievements in cinema and help independent filmmakers find wider markets. Formats: 35mm, HDCam, Betacam SP & DVD. Entries for adjudication must be sub-

mitted on a 1/2" DVD (NTSC). 35mm must have composite optical soundtracks. Entry Fee: \$40 Contact: Rhode Island International Film Festival™ PO Box 162 Newport, RI 02840 USA Street Address: 96 Second Street, Newport, RI 02840 401/861-4445. fax: 401/847-7590 info@film-festival.org.

WOODS HOLE FILM FESTIVAL, July 29-Aug. 5, MA. Deadline: April 1; May 15 (final). A showcase for independent film w/ special emphasis on regional filmmakers & cinematography. Founded: 1991. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script. Awards: Best of the Fest, Best feature: drama, comedy, documentary; Short: drama, comedy, animation, documentary, experimental; Director's Choice Award for Cinematography. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: features: \$40, \$50 (final); shorts (under 40 min.): \$20, \$30 (final). Contact: JC Bouvier; (508) 495-3456; info@woods-holefilm-festival.org; www.woodshole-filmfesti.val.org.

INTERNATIONAL

ANTIMATTER: UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 22-30, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May 31 (final). Annual int'l fest seeks "imaginative, volatile, entertaining & critical" films & videos. Antimatter is "dedicated to cinema as art vs. product, regardless of the subversive or dangerous nature of its content, stylistic concerns or commercial viability." Selected works may be included in upcoming int'l tours. Industrial, commercial & studio products ineligible. Max 30 min., completed w/in past two years. Founded: 1998. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 1/2", 16mm, DVD, Mini-DV, Super 8. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$20 (final). Contact: Todd Eacrett, Director; (250) 385-3327; fax: 385-3327; info@antimatter.ws; www.antimatter.ws.

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MILANO FILM FESTIVAL, September , Italy. Deadline: May 31. Annual fest invites features films & shorts (under 45 min.) from anyone who'd like to "invent, build, & destroy new ideas of cinema." Open to all entries produced after January 1, 2005. Cats: any style or

genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student. Awards: Awards incl. Aprile Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, DV, Beta SP, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Festival; 011 39 02 713 613; info@milanofilmfestival.it; www.milanofilmfestival.it.

PLANET FOCUS: TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 1-5, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May 15. Fest recognizes that the "environment" is contested terrain, therefore invites submissions in all genres that critically examine the concept of "environment" & challenge current human/nature relations. Additionally, the fest pays special consideration to works that push the boundaries of the accepted notions of 'environment'; works that present cultural perspectives that are under-represented in Canada & works that will have their world or Canadian premiere at fest. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP (PAL or NTSC), DigiBeta. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; (416) 531-1769; info@planetinfocus.org; www.planetinfocus.org.

SUNNY SIDE OF THE DOC MARKET,

June 27-23, France. Deadline: See Website/TBA. Annual market brings together ind. producers, distributors, commissioning editors, heads of TV programming depts & buyers from all over the world. Attended by some 539 companies from 35 countries, 183 buyers & commissioning editors & 120 TV channels. Market provides opportunities for project development & meeting partners w/ Side-by-Side sessions (one-on-one meetings w/ commissioning editors for advice on projects). Founded: 1990. Cats: doc. Preview on VHS. Contact: Pôle Média Belle de Mai ; 011 33 4 95 04 44 80; fax: 33 4 91 84 38 34; contact@sunnysideofthedoc.com; www.sunnysideofthedoc.com.

TAORMINA BNL FILM FESTIVAL, July 22-29, Italy. Deadline: April 15. Cats: feature. Contact: Enrico Ghezzi; 39 9422-1142; fax: 39 9422-3348; info@taoarte.it; www.taorminafilmfest.it.

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION FILM FESTIVAL, October 25-29, Stanford University. Deadline: June 1 (final). This festival, in its ninth year, celebrates films dealing with human rights, the environment, racism, war and peace, poverty, and similar issues. Cats: All genres and lengths. Formats:

16mm and 35mm, 1/2", Beta SP, DVD, PAL/NTSC; preview on 1/2" VHS (PAL/NTSC), DVD (NTSC region 0 or 1). Entry fee: \$25 up to 30 min, \$35 for films over 30 min. Contact: (650) 724-5544; Fax: (650) 725-0011 info@unaff.org; www.unaff.org/2006/.

VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, September 28 - October 13, 2006, British Columbia, Canada. Deadline July 3rd (final). The Vancouver International Film Festival aims to encourage international understanding through cinema, as well as foster the art by facilitating a dialogue between cinema professionals from around the world. Organizers plan for a program of 200 films from 50 countries. Cats: features and medium length (over 30 min.) Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 70mm, NTSC, PAL, BetaSP, DigiBeta, DV Cam. HD Cam. Entry Fee: US\$40 Contact: 1181 Seymour St, Vancouver, BC, CANADA V6B 3M7 Ph. 604-685-0260 Fx. 604-688-8221 E. viff@viff.org; www.viff.org.

VANCOUVER QUEER FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, August 7-17, Canada. Deadline: April 3. Annual event screens both int'l & local Canadian films & videos of interest to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgendered communi-

ties. Festival screens work of all lengths & genres & incl. panels, workshops, & receptions providing a forum for the development of dialogue between LGBT people of all ethnicities, cultures, ages, abilities, & gender definitions. Fees paid for independent work screened. Founded: 1989. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: Cash awards; audience awards.. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS, NTSC only. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Michael Barrett, Director of Programming; (604) 844-1615; fax: 844-1698; general@outonscreen.com; www.outonscreen.com.

WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL/AUCKLAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-30, New Zealand. Deadline: April 15. Noncompetitive fest, w/ a core program of 120 features (& as many shorts), fest simultaneously presents Auckland & Wellington Film Festivals & programs that travel to cities of Dunedin & Christchurch & other cities throughout New Zealand. Founded: 1972. Cats: Feature, Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Bill Gosden; 011 64 4 385 0162; fax: 801 7304; entries@nzff.co.nz; www.nzff.co.nz.

Work Wanted

By Marshall Crook

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notice@iavf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless: double-check details before sending anyone anything.

AMAZEFILMS is constantly looking for feature films and short films to include in its programming. We welcome filmmakers and writers to send us their work for consideration free of charge. If you feel that your short film, feature film or documentary film that you have produced would make a good addition to the AmazeFilms programming, please fill out the film submission form: www.amazefilms.com/submissions.

BIG FILM SHORTS is a film distribution company that specializes in short films, as well as other media and formats. We serve both as sales agents for filmmakers with whom we have contracts and as consultants for film bookers and programmers, drawing on the films in our catalog as well as films we select from third-party sources. The core of our business is our film library, which contains shorts in a variety of genres, lengths, formats and national origins. A great many of our films were popular favorites and award winners at Sundance, Telluride, Cannes and other leading film festivals in the United States and around the world.

COMEDY EXPRESS TV seeks funny films under 7 min. to show and promote on television. Please look at our website

www.comedyexpressstv.com which gives more background as well as the online release which MUST accompany all submissions. Contact: Adam Gilad 9229 Sunset Blvd LA, CA 90069 adamgilad@mac.com; 310 271 0023.

FOOTAGE REQUEST The annual Avid Show Reel features clips from the most innovative commercials, documentaries, music videos, feature films, television programs, and more from around the globe. And all created with Avid editing systems and/or Softimage animation software. It's a great, free way to get valuable exposure throughout the year—from NAB in Las Vegas to IBC in Amsterdam. For details, see www.avid.com/footage/.

GLOBAL VILLAGE STOCK FOOTAGE If you are a producer owning the rights to high quality betacam footage that may be of interest to other producers, we will add your material to our database at no charge to you. We will pay 50% of the royalties we collect for the licensing of your footage. In most cases we need to have first generation copies or field masters at our facility to ensure rapid delivery to clients. We also prefer footage or programs that are logged by computer so we can readily add the footage descriptions to our database. For more information send us an instant E-mail or call: 1.800.798-FIND or 1.707.823-1451 or fax us at 1.707.829-9542.

GOOGLE VIDEO UPLOAD PROGRAM is accepting digital video files of any length and size. Simply sign up for an account and upload your videos using our Video Uploader (you must own the rights to the works you upload), and, pending our approval process and the launch of this new service, we'll include your video in Google Video, where users will be able to search, preview, purchase and play it. <https://upload.video.google.com/>.

THE MOUNTAIN FUND at www.mountainfund.org is looking for works that educate about issues affecting people in mountainous regions of the world. We want to add such content to our site to educate our

visitors. If you are willing to have your works on our site. Please contact us.

NATURAL HEROES is a Public Television series featuring independently produced films and videos. We're searching for compelling stories that feature people challenging current environmental standards and conditions. Accepted works will be packaged for broadcast and distributed to Public Television stations across the country. There are no fees, contracts are non-exclusive, and any viewers interested in purchasing your film would be sent directly to you. Download the Submission Form and Call for Entries from www.natural-heroesstv.org Questions? Email natural-heroes@krcc.org or phone 707-585-8522 x124.

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TV is looking for strong, original, quality educational and artistic programming for 2006. Submissions are welcomed from across the globe—from production companies, community organizations, NGOs, filmmakers, students and artists—from November 2005 through April 2006 in the following categories: Conflicts and Rights, Caring for the elderly, the sick, the disabled, and Street Arts. Films must have been completed after 1/1/98 and can be from 10 to 90 min. long. For details and submission form. For submission form and further information go to www.udc.edu/cable_tv_19/about_cabletv_19.htm or devans-pritchard@udc.edu.

THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL is a new digital cable channel dedicated to airing, exclusively, the works of the independent documentary filmmaker. There isn't a single type of documentary that they will not show, and they are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. See the website for submission instructions. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or email programs@documentarychannel.com.

NOTICES

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aifw.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIFW. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless: double-check details before sending anyone anything.

By Marshall Crook

mit for a public screening, check out: www.twoboosts.com/pioneer/submit.htm

CONFERENCES / WORKSHOPS

RAW WORD READINGS, a monthly readings series seeks 10-page excerpts from original screenplays. Up-and-coming actors perform 10 pages of work by up-and-coming screenwriters at Galapagos Art Space in Brooklyn, and Rock Candy (performance space) in NY Once a month. Please submit your pdf or word file, 10 compelling pages of material (include the title in the filename) for consideration rawwordreadings@yahoo.com.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE

ARTS: offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Nonprofit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made. Contact: (212) 319-2910 x. 9.

24TH STREET WRITERS GROUP seeking new members - Monday Nights. Well established Manhattan based screenwriting group is seeking committed new members for Monday evening meetings. If interested in being considered for membership, please send a 30 page writing sample in PDF format to the24thstwriters@aol.com.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

EXPERIMENTAL TV CENTER offers grants & presentation funds to electronic media/film artists & organizations. Program provides partial assistance; maximum amount varies. Presentations must be open to public; limited-enrollment workshops & publicly supported educational institutions ineligible. Appl. reviewed monthly. Deadline: on-going. Contact: Program Dir., ETVC, 109 Lower Fairfield Rd., Newark Valley, NY 13811; (607) 687-4341; www.experimentaltvcenter.org

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP - Film Forum is accepting applications for fiscal sponsorship from filmmakers. Film Forum retains 5% of all funds received on a project's behalf from foundations, corporations and individuals. To apply, email a cover letter, project description, bios of project leaders and proposed project budget to Dominick

Balletta at dominick@filmforum.org. Dominick Balletta/ General Manager/ FILM FORUM/ 209 West Houston Street/ NYC 10014/ 212.627.2035.

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues, especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: To Challenge Stereotypes - We support the creation of art that reflects the full diversity and complexity of women's lives. To Increase Opportunities - We advocate for women artists to be paid fairly and to have more opportunities to make a living from their creative work. To learn more about our work, and to sign up to receive these funding newsletters, visit our web page at: www.WomenArts.org.

IFP MARKET Are you seeking financing or a producer for your script? Completion funds or distribution for your documentary? Looking to expand your contact list? The IFP Market is a great place to begin: the only selective forum in the US to introduce new work to an industry-only audience of sales companies, fest programmers, distributors, broadcasters, producers and agents from the US and abroad. Rolling deadlines begin May 1. Application fees and Attendance fee upon acceptance as well as other details can be found online at www.ifp.org starting March 1. For more details call 212-465-8200 x 222 or email marketreg@ifp.org

THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION, which supports individual women artists, arts programs, and arts organizations in the Greater Philadelphia region, has announced the Art and Change Grants provide immediate, short-term grants of up to \$2,500 to women artists in the Philadelphia region who need financial assistance to take advantage of opportunities for art and change. The artist's opportunity for change must be supported by or be in collaboration with a Change Partner — a person, organization, or business that is providing the opportunity or is a part of the opportunity in some way. Eligible Change Partners include men-

COMPETITIONS

SHORT FILM SLAM, NYC's only weekly short film competition, is looking for submissions. Competition on Sundays at 2 p.m. At the end of each show the audience votes for a winning film, which receives further screenings at the Pioneer Theater. To enter, you must have a film, 30 min. or less, in a 35mm, 16mm, BetaSP, VHS, or DVD format. To submit your film, stop by the Pioneer Theater (155 E. 3rd St.) during operating hours, call (212) 254-7107, or visit www.twoboosts.com/pioneer for more information.

HOLLYWOOD GATEWAY SCREENWRITING CONTEST:

The mission of the Hollywood Gateway Screenwriting Contest is to guide aspiring writers to their success through opportunity, mentoring and unparalleled access to Hollywood decision makers. \$5,000 Cash prize and an initial 12-month option agreement against a potential \$100,000 purchase price, among other prizes. Early Entries February 28th, 2005 - Special Early Bird Entry Cost \$35.00. Contest Deadline April 30th, 2005 - Entry Cost \$40.00 Late Entry June 30th, 2005 - Entry Cost \$50.00. Type of Material: Screenplays 80-140 pages. International entries written in English are welcome. For more information go to www.hollywoodgateway.com/details.php

THE PIONEER THEATER—NYC's showcase of independent cinema. Always on the lookout for new movies to screen. To sub-

tors, editors, galleries, community art spaces, theaters, nonprofit organizations, film studios, and clubs. (Art and Change Grant Deadlines: April 11, June 20, and October 31, 2005.) Visit the Leeway Foundation Web site for grantmaking guidelines and application forms.

THE PACIFIC PIONEER FUND supports emerging documentary filmmakers—limited to organizations anywhere in the US, certified by the IRS as “public charities”, which undertake to supervise any project for which individuals receive funds, and to control the selection of individual recipients of funds. The fund does not provide support for endowments, building campaigns, accumulated deficits, or ordinary operating budgets, or make grants to individuals. The fund does not support instructional or performance documentaries or student film projects. Grants are limited to filmmakers or videographers who live and work in California, Oregon and Washington. Approximately \$1,100,000. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. Application deadlines in 2005-06 are 1/2/06 and 5/1/06. Print out an application from the web site [<http://www.pacificpioneerfund.com>] and send it, along with a VHS tape of up to 10 minutes of edited footage from the project for which support is sought, to P.O. Box 20504, Stanford, CA 94309. If you have questions, email Armin Rosencranz: armin@stanford.edu. For urgent questions, phone 650-996-3122.

THE STANDBY PROGRAM assists individuals and organizations in the creation and preservation of work by offering high-end video, film, audio and digital-media post-production services at affordable rates, video and audio tape preservation, and restoration services, technical consultation and fiscal sponsorship. For additional information: visit www.standby.org or call (212) 206-7858.

WGBH LAB, a program of PBS affiliate WGBH Boston, invites independent filmmakers and innovators from related industries to produce or post-produce an inde-

pendently funded film for a six- to nine-month residency at WGBH from September to May. The Filmmaker-in-Residence grants WGBH a right of first refusal on new proposals, finished programs and/or program concepts for local or national broadcast or development. The Filmmaker-in-Residence will curate or participate in screenings and portfolio sessions with WGBH colleagues. The Filmmaker-in-Residence program is open to independent filmmakers and producers from related industries such as commercial television, feature films, advertising, Web, or animation. New England area residents are given priority. See <http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/producing-for-tv/index.html> for details.

KQED-TV IN SAN FRANCISCO like most local PBS affiliates provides in-kind post-production assistance to a number of independent projects each year. Subject must be compelling & of interest to KQED's viewers, or attract new audiences. Material must pass technical evaluation for broadcast quality. Producer must supply rough cut for review. KQED also takes on a number of co-productions each year. For more info, call (415) 553-2859 or go to www.kqed.org/tv/indieproducers/.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND for Women Filmmakers \$20,000 scholarship offered by Muse Media. San Francisco Women's Film Festival forms relationship with Muse Media to support women filmmakers to complete their films. For more information about how to qualify for the scholarship contact: scholarship@womensfilmfestival.us. Visit womensfilmfestival.us.

THE TEXAS FILMMAKERS' PRODUCTION FUND is an annual grant awarded to emerging film and video artists in the state of Texas. Funded through revenues from benefit film premieres and private and corporate donations, the TFPF is our effort to redress the loss of public funds for filmmakers. Application available at www.austinfilm.org/tfpf in March, 2006.

MICROCINEMAS / SCREENINGS

911 MEDIA ARTS CENTER was incorporated in 1984 and is considered Washington State's premier Media Arts Center. 911 screenings are booked quarterly. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Quarterly deadlines are as follows: Spring -> Last day of February. Summer -> Last day of May. Fall -> Last day of August. Winter -> Last day of November. Submission Address: Screenings Committee / 911 Media Arts Center / 402 9th Ave N. / Seattle, WA 98109 / (206) 682-6552 / info@911media.org.

FILM AND VIDEO 825 - Series of bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. In a city dominated by Hollywood, venues such as ours become a necessity for artists working in time-based media that is outside the mainstream of narrative cinema. Our curatorial vision is open to both shorts and features in experimental, performance, animation, and documentary forms. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652-8272, F: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html

BROADCAST / CABLECAST

AXLEGREASE PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE SHOW Tuesdays at 2:00 PM on Channel 20 Become part of current media making history and submit your media work to be shown on TV, on our legendary public access cable show. Commercial free, 100% media art TV. Provide us with mini-dv, vhs, svhs, or 8mm video (ntsc) tapes with a running time of 28 min. or less. Your work may also be displayed in our storefront window. Your entry will become a part of our Member Viewing Library unless you include an SASE. Axlegrease is open to local and international artists. Send tapes

Attention: Axlegrease. Formats accepted: mini-dv, s-vhs, vhs or dvd. Please visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.

DUTV. A progressive, nonprofit educational channel in Philadelphia seeks works by indie producers. All genres & lengths considered. Will return tapes. BetaSP, DV, dvd accepted for possible cablecast. Contact: Debbie Rudman, DUTV, 3141 Chestnut St., Bldg 9B, Rm 0016, Philadelphia, PA 19104; (215) 895-2927; dutv@drexel.edu; www.dutv.org.

GET YOUR FILM SHOWN ON SKY!

Propeller TV is the new national channel for film and television talent, to launch in the new year on SKY. The Film First strand of the channel is looking for short films of any length and genre. You don't have to be Spielberg to be considered for the channel, you could be an independent filmmaker or even a community-based group. Please send films on DVD for broadcast consideration to: John Offord, Propeller TV, c/o Screen Yorkshire, 46 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7EY john@propellertv.co.uk (0)7724 243680.

THE SHORT LIST. Weekly, half-hour international short film series on PBS and Cox Cable now licensing for 14th season. Considers shorts 30 secs. to 20 mins (fiction, animation, documentary). Send DVD screener with application form downloaded from www.theshortlist.cc.

WIRESTREAM FILMSEARCH seeks films for broadcast. WireStream Productions, in Co-operation with WireStream networks, is seeking independent films and television series for broadcast. Genre welcome include Drama, Comedy, SciFi, Fantasy, Nonfiction/Reality and Educational films and series, suitable for general/mature audiences. All entries must be available for all rights worldwide. Entries previously presented are eligible subject to confirmation of rights. Submit entries to Wayne Hicks, Executive Producer, via email to wayne@wirestreamproductions.com, or by Parcel Post to WireStream Productions,



Film still from *In the Pit*
by filmmaker Juan Carlos Rulfo (2006)

SUNDANCE INSTITUTE

DOCUMENTARY

The Sundance Institute Documentary Fund celebrates ten years of supporting the development and production of international documentary films and videos focused on contemporary human rights issues, freedom of expression, social justice, and civil liberties. The Documentary Fund is a core program of Sundance Institute.

For further information on the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund objectives and application guidelines, please visit www.sundance.org or contact:

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MYREELONLINE.NET is Launching Webcast Service, March 2006. Accepting all short film submissions under 10 minutes to be included in a weekly broadcast over the web. The films that are accepted will be broadcast over the web in a weekly show. We are currently accepting any and all genres, and the shorter the better. There is no charge for entries, and all filmmakers will retain all rights to the film. Email info@myreelonline.net for details or go to www.myreelonline.net.

Classifieds

By Marshall Crook

Deadline: First of each month, two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue).
Contact: (212) 807-1400, x241; fax: (212) 463-8519; classifieds@aivf.org; per issue cost: 0-240 characters (incl. spaces & punctuation): \$45 for nonmembers/\$30 for AIVF members; 241-360 chars: \$65/\$45; 361-480 chars: \$80/\$60; 481-600 chars: \$95/\$75; over 600 characters: Call for quote. (212) 807-1400, x241. Frequency discount: \$5 off per issue for ads running 5+ times. Ads exceeding the specified length will be edited. Place ad at www.aivf.org/independent/classifieds or type copy and mail with the check or money order to: AIVF, 304 Hudson St., 6th Fl., New York, NY 10013. Include billing address, daytime phone, # of issues, and valid member ID # for member discount. To pay by VISA/MC/AMEX include card #, name on card and expiration date.

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NEW DAY FILMS seeks energetic independent film and video makers with social issue docs for distribution to non-theatrical markets. If you want to maximize your audience while working within a remarkable community of activist filmmakers, New Day is the perfect home for your film. New Day is committed to promoting diversity within our membership and the media we represent. Explore our catalog at www.newday.com, then contact Alice Elliott at join@newday.com or 212-924-7151.

OUTCAST FILMS an emerging LGBT film distributor seeks social issue docs which will foster the critical and essential discussions around civil rights, health care, and sexuality which largely impact the LGBT community. Distribution consultation services also available on a sliding scale. Inquire at or visit www.outcastfilms.com.

THE NEW YORK CINEMA MARKET - rescheduled, July 7-9, 2006. Deadline: April 30. New film market catering to indie filmmakers. 20 min seg from 40 films over 3 days together with 6 seminars. Exhibition Formats: 35mm, 16mm, BetaSp. Preview VHS & DVD. Submission Fee: \$35, Contact 646-285-6596; Pchau@newyorkcinemamarket.com; www.newyorkcinemamarket.com

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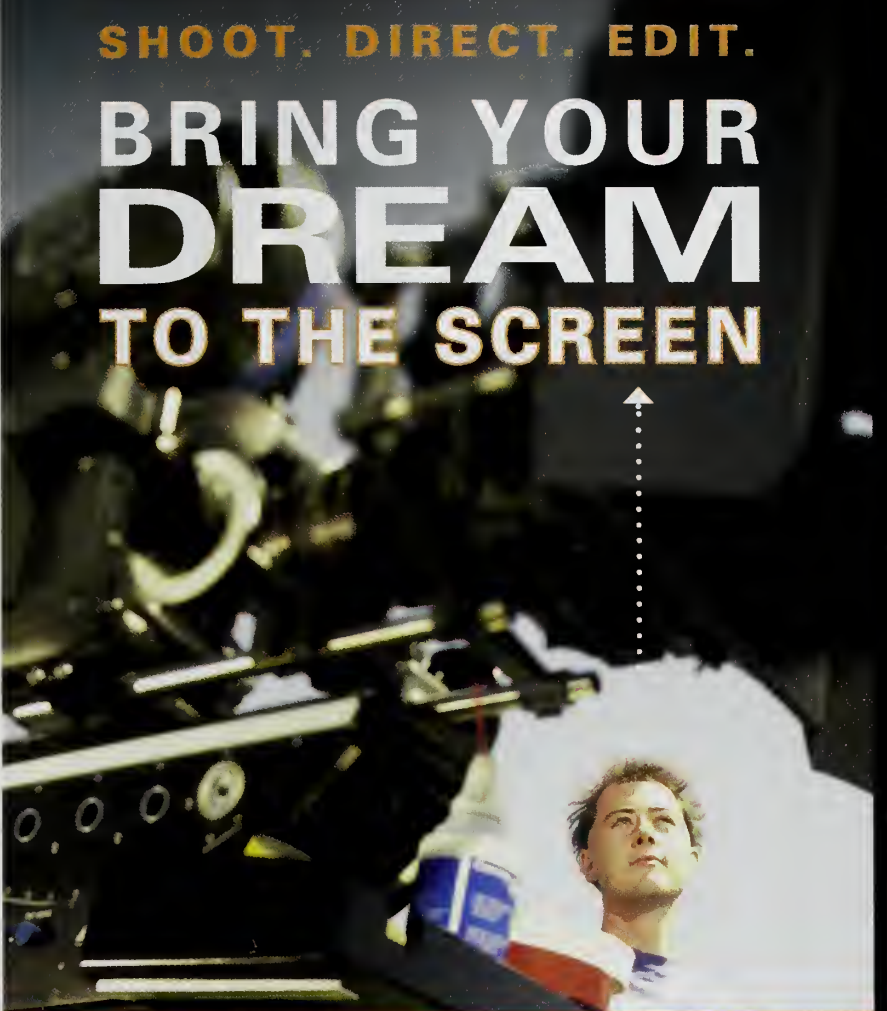


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The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including *The Independent* and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:



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THE LIST

By Erica Berenstein

Whether your production is low-budget, low-low-budget, no-budget, or aiming to clear the \$10 million mark, sometimes you have to think outside the box to get the bucks. What's the most creative/alternative route you've ever taken to raise money for a project?

"Hmmm... aside from begging, borrowing, bartering, bake sales, drug studies, drug deals, dirty dancing for rich and horny older women, subway performances, selling my comic book collection (I had soooo many friggin' X-men it would make you choke), catering dinner parties, going in debt \$38,000 on 5 different credit cards, whoring myself out to direct the crappiest ideas people had in return for ridiculously small amounts of cash, editing actors' reels, shooting actors' reels, cashing in stock options and taking it to Vegas to bet it all on black... I can't really think of anything I've done that was that creative/alternative that any other indie filmmaker hasn't done to raise money for their films. However, I am currently toying with the idea of blackmail. I'll let you know how it goes."

—Scott Perry, director, *The Outdoorsmen*

"As a maker of super-ultra-mega-unbelievably-low-budget feature films, the only person I have ever had to rely on for funding is myself. Both of my features were made for a few thousand dollars out of my own pocket. I find this is the best way to guarantee my vision makes it to the screen without interference."

—Joe Swanberg, director, *LOL*

"In the course of shooting my documentary, *Home Page*, which chronicled the web's first blogger, Justin Hall, back in 1996, we showed him doing a number of web searches on his laptop.

We managed to convince Excite, an up and coming search engine at the time, to give us money and web banner promotion on Excite's website in return for reshooting two cutaway close-ups using Excite's screen. It was right at the height of the dot-com boom, so it wasn't that difficult to come to an agreement. But they had just re-designed their website, so it was a real task convincing them that we needed to use the old design. We kept their logo at the edge of the screen so it wasn't too obvious. In the end, they were happy, we were 10,000 much-needed dollars wealthier, and we avoided giving a free plug to Microsoft."

—Doug Block, director, *51 Birch Street*, founder and co-host, The D-Word (www.dword.com)

"I needed some quick cash to finish my last short film, *Curiosity*. I bought a case of candy and sold it on the subway, telling people it was going towards sending me to film school."

—Scott Peehl, director, *Curiosity*

"We hosted an art auction with a live auctioneer and accompanying human beat boxer to raise funds for the documentary *Divided We Stand: A story of two patriots*."

—Jesse Epstein, Ohms Media Collective

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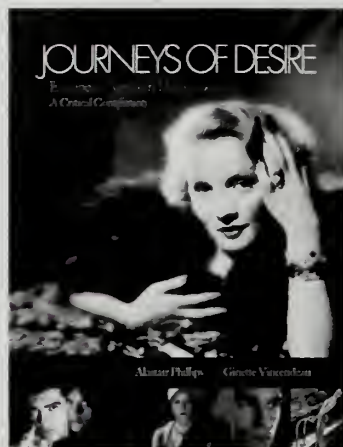


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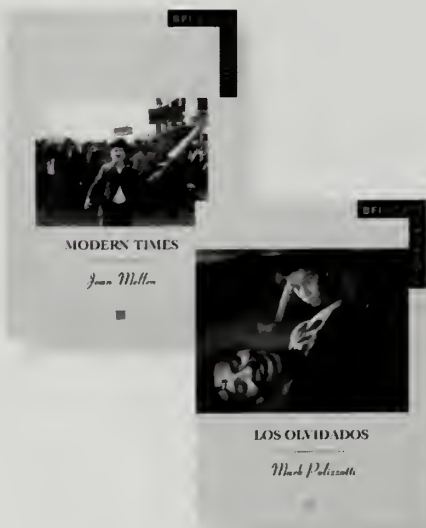
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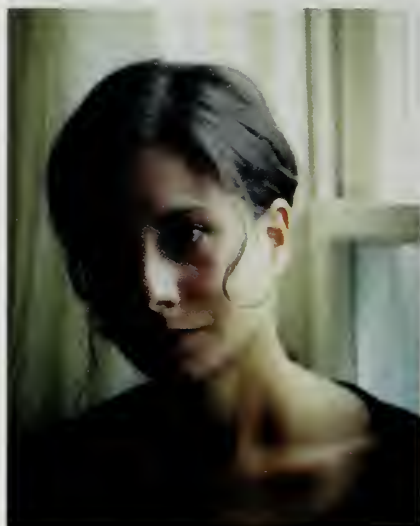
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Cover: Photograph by Peter G. Svarzbein
Above: Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert at a screening of their documentary, *A Lion in the House*. (Photograph courtesy of Steve Bognar and Julia Reichert)



Shana Liebman: Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

One day in early April I walked into the office to find four large burlap bags of mail. Hundreds of AIVF members, responding to our email request, had sent in their films for review—everything from a “romantic skamedy” to “a fantastic rendition of WeWe’s crusade to preserve African culture.” I was amazed, thrilled and then immediately sad—not so much because of WeWe’s struggles, (actually that one turned out to be a comedy)—but because the *Miracle on 34th Street*-sized delivery was proof that our membership was not only very talented, but also still very dedicated to AIVF.

It was a time when AIVF was facing major financial and ideological hurdles, and as this issue goes to print, we are still uncertain of the organization’s future. What we do know is that the organization needs to reorganize and relaunch in order to go forward, and that plans are underway to continue publishing *The Independent*—whether or not AIVF survives. [See AIVF Board Letter on page 50.] Regardless of that turnout, however, we decided this was a perfect time to reflect on a tremendous 30-year institution, which, as the following pages show, changed a lot of lives.

For the AIVF Tribute (pages 25-50), we asked those who have been intimately involved with the organization to reflect on its rise, influence, and politics since its inception in the early ‘70s. We also asked policy experts in the industry to explain

some of the crucial issues facing independent filmmakers today—including copyright law, internet regulation, and new distribution practices. Our hope is that somewhere in the juxtaposition of these two, there is some explanation of how we got to where we are.

For a clearer perspective on the *The Independent*’s evolution, we scattered our archives all over the floor. The mess turned into a visual timeline, which we tried to share by scattering excerpts from some of those issues throughout this one.

In addition to the special section, there’s a good dose of the regular *Independent* here. The Doc Doctor is in the house, as are Steven Bognar and his wife Julia Reichert (who founded New Day Films not long after AIVF launched). The makers of *A Lion in the House* wrote a very moving production journal about the moment their documentary about kids with cancer became personal. For the Q&A, Erica Berenstein spoke to the legendary D.A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus, and Nick Doob about their journey from *The War Room* to *Al Franken: God Spoke*.

And although it took us weeks, we opened, and stacked and sorted and watched all those DVDs, and finally, after much grueling deliberation, we are pleased to recommend some of our favorites.

Enjoy, thanks for reading
The Independent, and please stay tuned,
Shana Liebman
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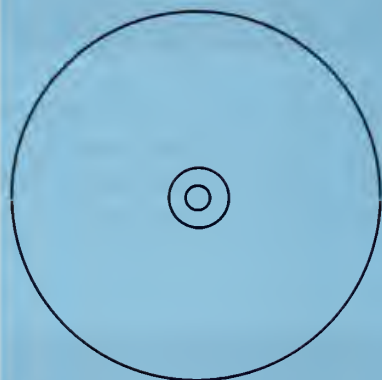


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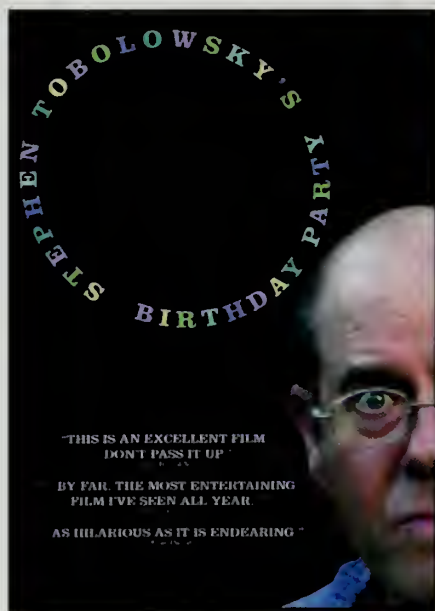
PETER G. SVARZBEIN's photographs have appeared in *Heeb Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Fortune Magazine*, and *The Independent* (on the covers of this issue and the May issue.) He was born and raised in El Paso, Texas and still misses the sunsets there.

n DVD



By Marshall Crook

Reviews of films now available on DVD



Stephen Tobolowsky's Birthday Party;

Dir: Robert Brinkmann; Monster Releasing;
www.stbpmovie.com

"Los Angeles," proclaims veteran character actor, Stephen Tobolowsky, "is like Hell but with good restaurants." I will take his word for it. With countless films to his credit (*Memento*, *Groundhog Day*) Tobolowsky has developed a natural rapport with the camera and it shows as he spends an hour and a half relating stories about life, the biz, and the collision of the two. Consistently funny and at times poignant, one doesn't need to recognize Tobolowsky to connect with his experiences. Plus he sneaks in an anecdote about the time he stared down a shark, which should sell the film all by itself.

Freedom State

Dir: Cullen Hoback; Aaron Douglas Enterprises, www.freedomstatethemovie.com

A band of misfits ride in a yellow school bus to the edge of the earth to wait out the apocalypse. (One proclaims herself President of the World and wears a cape to prove it.) They may be on a grand adventure or they may be escaped mental patients—who can say? Despite clunky acting, *Freedom State* looks great and feels light on its feet with bright colors, a barrage of whimsical sight gags, and symmetrical compositions that echo Wes Anderson. Watch out for the sublimely humorous husband and wife dinner conversation that takes place under the watchful eye of a mounted deer head.



Year of the Bull

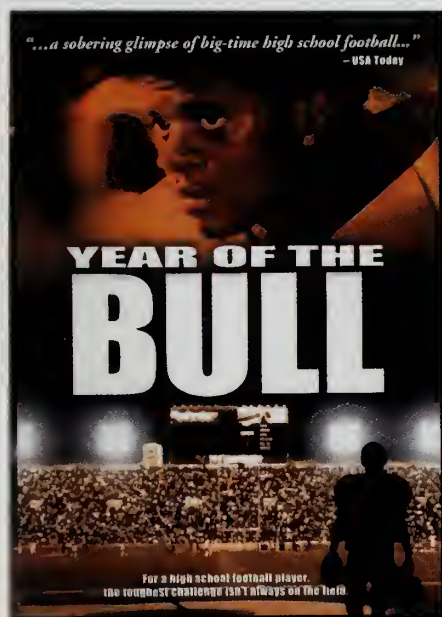
Dir: Todd Lubin; Urban Works Entertainment, www.urbanworksent.com;
www.yearofthebull.com

A coach taunts, curses, smacks, and shoves his players, turning athletic powerhouses into rag dolls: Welcome to high school football. Set in urban Miami, Todd Lubin's documentary takes place in a low-income, African American community where a football scholarship is the only way out. Similar to *Hoop Dreams*, the audience follows a potential superstar, Taurean Charles, as he experiences success, failure, injury, and the expectations of his family and community who live vicariously through his athleticism.

In Good Conscience

Dir: Barbara Rick; DP: Albert Maysles; Out of the Blue Films, Inc.; www.ingoodconscience.com

Sister Jeannine Gramick: What a nun! No cream-colored ponies and crisp apple strudel for her. Barbara Rick's engrossing documentary follows Sister Jeannine on her quest to bring Catholic ministry to homosexuals; the arc of the film is her attempt to broach the topic with Cardinal Ratzinger (then head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and now Pope Benedict XVI). Sweet and articulate with the tenacity of a PTA mom, Gramick proves herself to be more than the battle-against-intolerance type.



Smitten

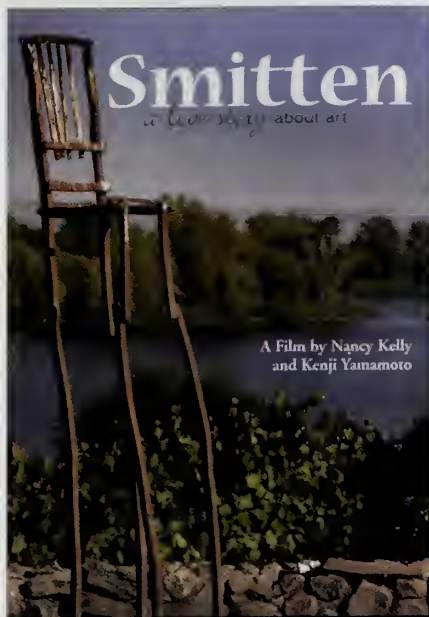
Dir: Nancy Kelly and Kenji Yamamoto; New Day Films, www.newday.com

A film about art for art lovers, *Smitten* is the story of Rene di Rosa, the elderly owner of the world's largest collection of Northern Californian art. On his farm/museum in Napa Valley, an orange car hangs from a tree, a house of glass bottles sits in a vineyard, and the walls of his spacious home are so saturated with art that paintings stretch across the ceiling as well. The film captures di Rosa's passion and we realize he is not a man of infinite wealth but instead of exquisite taste, one who finds ways to pay for what he wants so that he can share it with the world.

Acts of Worship

Dir: Rosemary Rodriguez; Manifesto Films; www.actsofworshipthemovie.com

Lacking the nightmarish momentum of *Requiem for a Dream* or the dangerous playfulness of *Trainspotting*, *Acts of Worship* is about the routine drudgery and squalor that comes with being a Lower East Side addict. The story's heart lays in the friendship between Alix (Ana Reeder), an addict, and Digna (Michael Hyatt), a successful photographer. The dirt-under-the-nails quality cannot be over-emphasized, though characters at times possess a sincerity and self-awareness that jolts the viewer out of the grim scenario and into a lesson learned.



Willie the Lion

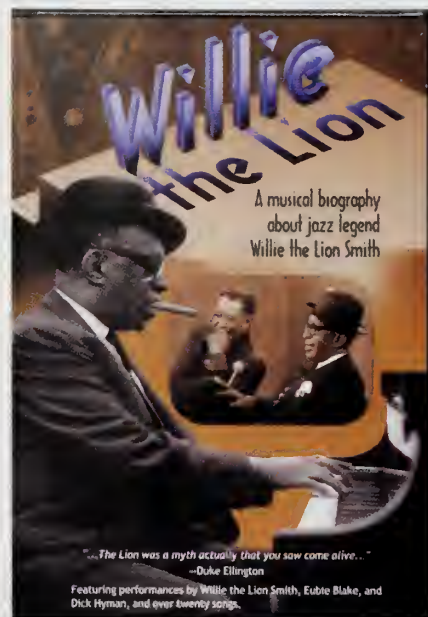
Dir: Marc Fields; Shanachie Entertainment Corp., www.shanachie.com

Marc Fields's doc is a love letter to the man Duke Ellington deemed "beyond category." Talking heads and archival footage tell the story of Willie "the Lion" Smith, one of the great Harlem jazz pianists. While some may shy from a doc so predictably created, when the storytellers are Artie Shaw and Amiri Baraka — men whose opinions count and stories resonate — one can't help but be sucked into the whirlpool of adoration for the man who taught the Duke, Thelonious Monk, and Shaw. Plus the soundtrack and concert footage are enough to satisfy any jazz fan.

Inside Iraq: The Untold Stories

Dir: Mike Shiley; www.insideiraqthemovie.com

The introduction is haunting: a black and white night vision video of two distant Iraqi men running about over which the voices of American soldiers debate whether or not to blow them up—we leave with the impression that they will. Shiley's film is not a polemic; instead he takes us along on his self-financed journey to Iraq where he captures mostly the mundane: tea in an outdoor cafe, chatting with the guy in the next car, candid photos of smiling strangers—which is exactly what is missing from CNN and Fox. It gives the daily report of "seventeen dead in a suicide bomb attack" its due horror.



Country Boys

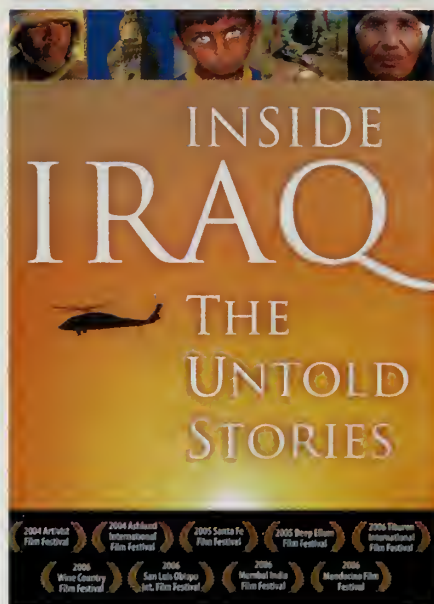
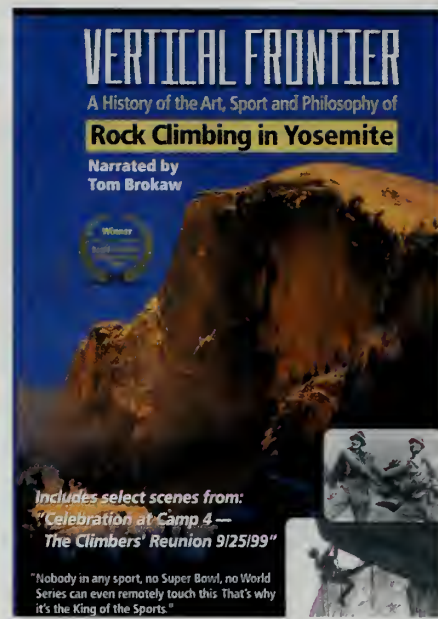
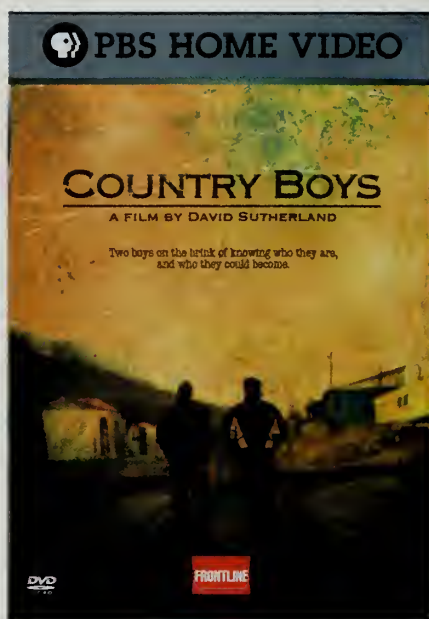
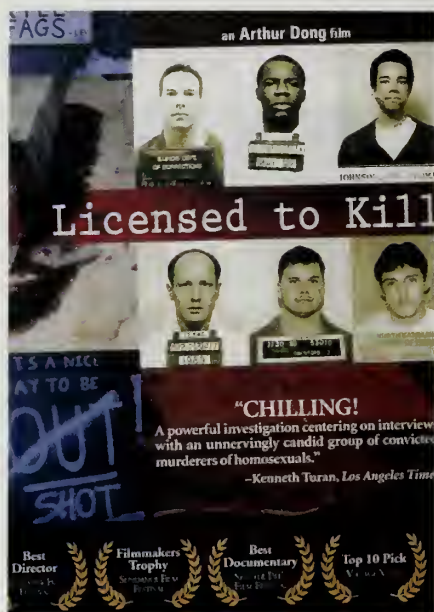
Dir: David Sutherland; David Sutherland Productions, Inc., www.davidsutherland.com

The Appalachian region of Eastern Kentucky, an impoverished land of dead or dying coal-mining towns, is the backdrop for this eye-opening documentary. The story follows Cody and Chris—the former an orphan with no legal guardian, the latter a provider for his family—who are intelligent, sensible, and well aware that they are stereotyped as "barbaric hillbillies." That they are victims of circumstance is salt in the wound, but both possess a visible if not spoken will to prove someone, somewhere, wrong.

Vertical Frontier

Dir: Kristi Denton Cohen; Peloton Productions, www.pelotonproductions.com

This is a solid documentary about Yosemite National Park's evolution into a rock-climber's Mecca. Adrenaline junkies will marvel at men and women who dangle by their fingertips; nature buffs will love the scenery; history hounds the story; and people like me will love the kitsch factor. I rocked out to the acousti-metal soundtrack (acoustic guitars layered over heartfelt '80-style thrashing) and was wowed by the reverberating voice-of-God narration by Tom Brokaw. Those who miss Brokaw's nightly broadcasts may wish to add themselves to the list above.



Licensed To Kill

Dir: Arthur Dong; Deep Focus Productions, Inc., www.deepfocusproductions.com

Arthur Dong's film is a brutal look at violence against homosexuals—brutal because the viewer is not allowed to look away from the results of these crimes, be they injury or death. Driven by Dong's interviews with inmates guilty of murdering gays, their reasoning is often perverse, and some show little to no remorse. Candid responses to "Why did you do it?" accompanied by news footage and crime-scene photographs take the audience to a frightening place.

Rolling for Jesus

Dir: Erica Sashin; Wide-Eyed Productions, Erica.wide.eyed@gmail.com

The sincerity, kindness, humor, and all around *New Yawk*-ness of Phillip Frabosilo, a cabbie who converted his car into a moving ministry, makes this film a winner. Frabosilo chats, listens to stories, provides spiritual advice, offers prayers, and delivers food and clothes to the poor and needy. Seriously, what's not to like? This wanna-be-hip-young-New-York-liberal-cynic was won over. As a documentary it is passable, but Phil is a star. Plus, according to him, "God don't care if I cheat on my taxes." Amen to that, brother.

Milk and Opium

Dir: Joel Palombo; Starke Filme; www.milkandopium.com

Two young Indian boys wander through a Delhi mall, the first they have ever seen. "Everything is in English," the narrator says. "This is like another country." *Milk and Opium* is about young Swaroop's wish to be a traveling musician. Ultimately he is the means to a larger, visual story: the comparison of rural Indian culture to the fast Westernization and modernization of urban India. The viewer marvels at the metro and the mall because our hero does, but we also marvel at the quieter, rural, more natural moments. After all, we have seen malls and skyscrapers, but few of us have really seen India.

The Last Atomic Bomb

Dir: Robert Richter; www.richtervideos.com

Richter's documentary is a soft meditation on the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, specifically how both play into fears for the future. Images of urban wasteland and the recollections of survivors provide more emotional bang than any CGI monstrosity or *Terminator 2*-style production design. One woman takes the filmmakers to a Nagasaki back lot where her childhood home had stood before being obliterated by the bomb. Stories of survival are juxtaposed with footage of current activists lecturing students on present day nuclear armaments, a frightening counterpoint that reveals our governments really have not learned a thing.



Not to Be Missed...

More great films by AIVF members



Zero Degrees of Separation

Dir: Elle Flanders; Graphic Pictures Inc.;
www.zerodegreesofseparation.com

The Morrison Project

Dir: Amy Morrison Williams;
www.themorrisonproject.us

Bass Man

Dir: Michael Bayer; Flathead Films,
www.flatheadfilms.com;
www.bassmanmovie.com

Bad Boy Made Good

Dir: Ron Frank and Paul D. Lehrman,
www.badboymadegood.com

Back to Life

Dir: Samantha Reynolds;
www.backtolifethemovie.com

Big Enough

Dir: Jan Krawitz;
www.stanford.edu/~krawitz

Shared History

Dir: Felicia Furman; Felicia Furman
Productions; www.sharedhistory.org

Family Fundamentals; Coming Out Under Fire

Dir: Arthur Dong; Deep Focus
Productions, Inc.,
www.deepfocusproductions.com

Monster Road

Dir: Brett Ingram; Bright Eye Pictures,
www.brighteyepictures.com

Pulling

Dir: Jay Frisch; El Gato Rojo
Productions, egrproductions@nyc.rr.com

A Family Undertaking

Dir: Elizabeth Westrate; Fanlight
Productions, www.fanlight.com

To The Hills 2

Dir: Fritz Donnelly;
FilmCartel, www.tothehills.com

The Shape of Water

Dir: Kum-Kum Bhavnani;
www.theshapeofwatermovie.com

Almost Home

Dir: Brian Lichtenstein;
www.almosthomedoc.org

Vito After

Dir: Maria Pusateri; Dreams Late
Productions, www.dreamslate.net/press

Surfing for Life

Dir: David L. Brown; David L. Brown
Productions, www.surfingforlife.com

Goodbye Baby: Adoptions from Guatemala

Dir: Patricia Goudvis; New Day Films,
www.newday.com

Muskrat Lovely

Dir: Amy Nicholson; Myrtle & Olive,
www.muskratlovely.com

Alone Across Australia

Dir: Jon Muir and Ian Darling; Direct
Cinema Limited, www.directcinema.com

The Aphrodite Project

Dir: Jennifer A. Reinish and Justin
Thomas Rowe; Ten Toes Over Productions,
www.theaphroditeproject.org

Sacco and Vanzetti

Dir: Peter Miller; Willow Pond Films,
www.willowpondfilms.com

Thirst

Dir: Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman;
Bullfrog Films, www.bullfrogfilms.com

The Fire Next Time

Dir: Patrice O'Neill; www.docurama.com

Aging Out

Dir: Roger Weisberg and Vanessa Roth;
Public Policy Productions,
www.docurama.com

Doing Time: Life Inside the Big House

Dir: Alan and Susan Raymond; Video
Vérité, www.docurama.com

Omar & Pete

Dir: Tod Lending; Nomadic Pictures,
Ltd., www.docurama.com

Prom Night in Kansas City

Dir: Hali Lee and Peter von Ziegesar;
Zeitgeist Films, www.zeitgeistvideo.com

The Wraith of Cobble Hill

Dir: Adam Parrish King;
Monique-adam@earthlink.net

A Perfect Fit

Dir: Ron Brown;
www.aperfectfitmovie.com

West 47th Street

Dir: Bill Lichtenstein and June Peoples;
Lichtenstein Creative Media, Inc.,
www.lcmedia.com

The Pact

Dir: Andrea Kalin; Spark Media,
www.sparkmedia.org

outtakes

Mentors for Media Makers

By Erica Berenstein

"We were starving artists. Starving to feed ourselves on celluloid and barbecued chicken," recalls filmmaker Ron Mann of the time during the late '70s when he hitchhiked from Paris to Cannes, slept on the beach, and carried his sleeping bag to meetings with producers. Somewhere along that route, he met director Frederick Marx (*Hoop Dreams*, *Boys to Men?*). Both were inexperienced and looking for guidance. "We were cinophiles wanting to meet filmmakers," says Mann.

But even after the success of *Hoop Dreams*, Marx laments that he was unable to find professional filmmakers willing to offer support. Not having had a mentor "continues to be an Achilles heal for me," he says. Mentoring, as Marx sees it, is a crucial part of the process of turning passive recipients of media into active creators. And with increasingly accessible digital tools and so many new media



Mentees: Al-Tran Buie, Frederik Marx, Spencer Shefts, and Calixto Baez

outlets and political groups soliciting work from kids, he thinks it's an ideal time to encourage young people to tell their stories.

He recently contacted Mann—whose most recent film *Tales of the Rat Fink* explores Ed "Big Daddy" Roth and custom car culture—and Doug Block—the founder and co-host of the D-Word community, an online discussion forum for

documentary professionals—to invite them to participate in a new program he is developing, the Doc Mentoring Studio. Still in its nascent stages, the program will link students, community activists, and young nonfiction media makers with professional filmmakers who can help the students develop technical and production skills, as well as guide them in the craft of storytelling and other less

concrete aspects of nonfiction filmmaking.

"When you have young people taking up these tools, they're typically not jaded," says Mann. "They just need a bit of guidance so they don't spend their energy in the wrong place."

The current plan is for Studio students, of which a minimum fifty percent will be people of color or from low-income backgrounds, to

The crew from Upressplay.com, a networking website, yuk it up

participate in the program for eight weeks. During that time, they'll produce work that will be screened in their communities, broadcast through potential programming partnerships with Current TV, BBC2, and PBS, or distributed via the internet and "every medium imaginable," says Marx. In addition to the Studio's actual post-production facilities, he hopes production companies such as Lucasfilm will give students access to their studios. He also hopes to create franchises in other cities.

The aim is not to churn out future filmmakers, but to foster "active citizens engaged with media," says Marx. Mann agrees: "You can go to a factory school and do it that way, but by having someone that mentors you, it's more in the tradition, the Socratic approach."

Mann's own mentor, director Emile de Antonio, "taught me everything I know. More importantly, he opened up his address book and showed me the ropes."





Ben Blaine at a Mobile Cinema screening

On the flip side, as a college professor, Mann admits, “I get more out of it than the students. I get so much feedback.” Marx adds that many people of his generation tend to disconnect from young people and “often have fears around digital technology. They need to be mentored by the mentees.”

Block agrees that learning can be much more productive when the exchange of information comes from both sides. “Mentoring doesn’t just have to be taking someone under your wing for a long period of time. It can be a more general thing—a chance to share information,” he says. It can also help to

form bonds that will hopefully live on beyond an 8-week session.

For more information, see www.fmarxfilm.com

PRESS PLAY

It was while Matthew Jones was seeking cast and crew for his film projects at Columbia College that he realized the need for a “a distribution outlet for our work along with a network to recruit from.”

So he built Upressplay.com. The site includes uCrew—a group of writers, directors, cinematographers, sound designers, and actors, many

of whom were in Jones’s classes and understood the grueling and often unglamorous life of a film student. “It’s low or no pay usually,” Jones says, “so you have to believe, and you have to love it.”

Five years later, the site has turned into a successful networking center, with sections for watching and downloading clips, exhibiting reel and resume, and finding crew. It’s also a content producer and a showcase for members’ work. V.2, released in April 2006, is a DVD compilation of shorts and music videos including “Back to Reality,” the first installment of an episodic dramatic comedy called “Roscoe Village,” and a music

video for Chicago metal band Mazarene. The DVD includes directors’ commentaries, behind-the-scenes footage, photo galleries, and cast and crew bios. V.2 is sold over the website and showcased at release parties.

The company’s first DVD, V.1, was a collection of shorts including two horror comedies, a comedic mini-rock opera, a music video for rock band Court Jester, and a live set from Dye the Sky. Over 300 units of V.1 have sold and the team is aiming to double their sales with V.2. This summer they will release V.3, featuring shorts and music videos, as well as episode 2 of “Roscoe

Village,” which Jones co-wrote, directed, and edited.

—Simone Swink.

See www.upressplay.com for more information.

MOVIES ON THE MOVE

The original idea was to drive filmmaker Ben Blaine into the countryside and abandon him, but since Ben can't drive and doesn't own a mobile phone, his friends “thought it'd be great to do an event where I'm driven into the countryside and abandoned and people have to find me just using the Shooting People mailing list,” explains Blaine. “Thankfully this soon turned into a slightly friendlier idea—the Mobile Cinema.”

So with a van, a projector, a screen, a sound system, and a DVD player, Blaine and his team spent two weeks exhibiting shorts throughout the United Kingdom. “We use the internet to find our audience, but then we bring all the rest to you in the real world.”

Blaine had been a member of Shooting People—an online network for exchanging ideas and finding crews that was launched with 60 filmmakers in 1998 (today the site has an active membership of over 29,000)—when the idea for Mobile Cinema was born. Chatting with Shooting People's founders Brits Cath Le Couteur and Jess Search, he mentioned that, “thanks to Shooters [Shooting People for those in the know], there are hundreds and hundreds of films being made every year, but the downside is no

one gets to see them and wouldn't it be great if Shooters did something to change that. And they did one of their sideways glances and said ‘go on then.’”

Now, traveling from the Shetland Isles to Bristol, the team is never sure how many viewers to expect. “Audience size always varies and one of the joys is never really know-

“Cinema is a real thing that is always best experienced in a room full of people and everything we've done with the Mobile Cinema has just confirmed for me that feeling.”

—S.S.

Follow their progress at www.themobilecinema.com or <http://shootingpeople.org/bensblog.php>.

you [your name here] for supporting independent film” to remind viewers that “you have a contract with the filmmakers, and if you want extra copies, please buy them,” explains Bob Alexander, president of Indiepix.

“There's a social contract between the audience and the filmmaker,” says Alexander,

“The audience likes to know that most of their money is going to the filmmaker. They understand these are small or limited projects, and they want to know the guy who did it is going to benefit.”

—Bob Alexander

ing who is going to turn up,” says Blaine. In Winchester, they had two people but when they played “the Harrisons' back garden up in Leeds, not only did Shooters come from the whole of the North but most of the street came along to see what the noise was. It was brilliant.”

Lest Americans dismay, the Mobile Cinema tour is coming to the United States as soon as Blaine and his brother Chris finish their own short film about a talking panda. They plan to begin the US tour in New York and roll right across to Los Angeles. As Blaine says,

PIRACY BE GONE!

Indiepix and PixelTools Corporation recently announced that the 2,000 films available on Indiepix.net's Download-To-Own system will be watermarked using a new technology called MPEG Escort. The invisible, digital watermark allows online purchasers to make copies, but prevents pirates from doing so, (the watermark makes it simple to trace who originally purchased and downloaded the film.)

Indiepix also plans to place a slate at the beginning of each film that says “Thank

who hopes that improvements to the technology for downloading films will help both independent filmmakers as well as his consumers. “The audience likes to know that most of their money is going to the filmmaker. They understand these are small or limited projects, and they want to know the guy who did it is going to benefit.” He adds, “There's this whole area of fair use and the independent filmmaker is very much interested in having his work distributed and visible, and he doesn't want a lot of restrictions on how that works.”

THE STORIES BEHIND THE MOVIES MOVING

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JIMMY DEAN

STEVE McQUEEN

STANLEY KUBRICK

CHARLIE CHAPLIN

JAMES BOND

SUPERMAN

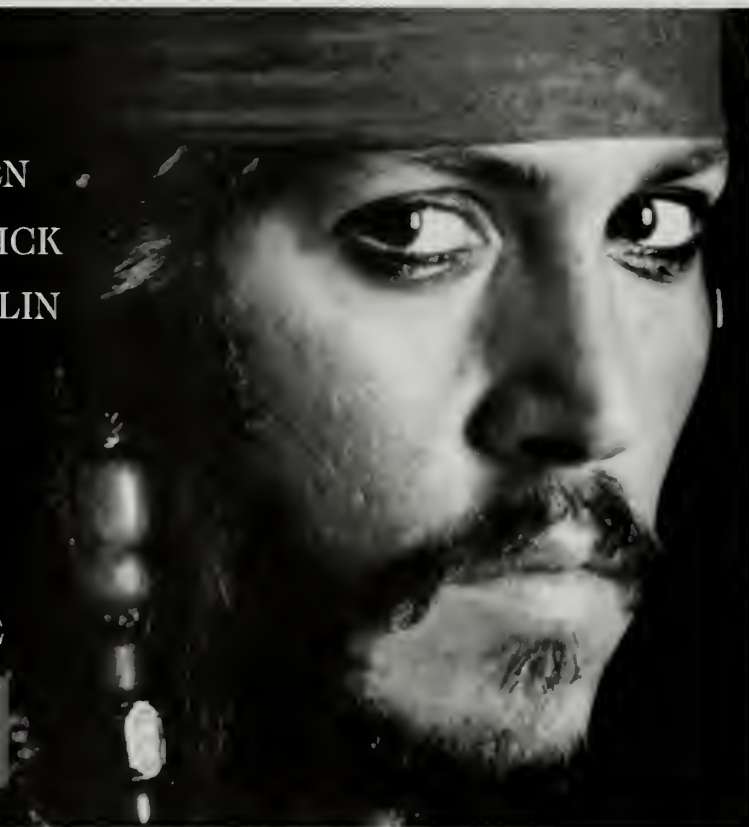
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PICTURES

One of Alexander's favorite new downloads is a "really small film called *Infinite Vision*. The filmmaker is from India, and the film is about a prominent doctor, sort of a cultural hero, who developed a new approach to cataract eye surgery, and it's saved millions of people from going blind and dying prematurely. That title has done well over 1,000 units in the last year. I look at it and say no one would have known about it if we hadn't gotten behind it."

—S.S.

BREAKING OUT

After 17 years publishing *Moving Pictures* magazine, the Maitland Primrose Group is partnering with other outlets to launch an alternative distribution channel. Maitland Primrose Media will "offer a complete chain of digital distribution for independents" that is "focused on the audience-viewer side" says *Moving Pictures* publisher C. Margaret Tritch.

When *Moving Pictures* began publishing in 1989, it was a trade publication playing to the same audience as *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter*, and *Screen International*. Their motto, "going places other film magazines fear to tread," has remained their goal even as their prospective audience has changed. In 2004, the magazine was relaunched as a prosumer publication seeking to fill the niche between gossip and trade publications about the film industry.

Their new media arm will film interviews with filmmakers and discussion panels at some of the larger festivals. These will be available on the *Moving Pictures* magazine website, as well as on screens at national theatre chains. Withoutabox, the online network famous for helping streamline submissions to film festivals, also plans to publish these interviews, as well as partner with MPM on a short film contest.

—S.S.

ASK THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

My documentary has three potential endings. How do I choose one?

False starts, fake endings, such are the tricks that storytelling—and life—plays on us. But it's important to remember that endings are choices, even when documenting real events.

If your story is conflict-driven, the ending will come shortly after the resolution of the conflict. Exactly where in the plot this happens depends on the intensity of the conflict and the nature of the resolution. If your story is not conflict-driven, the challenge is that sometimes there seems to be no ending. Leaving you to create an artificial sense of completion—a much more subjective task. The best way to do this is to make sure you cover all angles of a character or topic so that your audience feels a certain level of satisfaction or saturation. Do more than that, though, and you may be accused of being self-indulgent.

The characters' stories have to wrap up in descending order—minor characters first, main character last. If this doesn't happen, the story will feel disjointed, as if it has multiple endings. You might say to yourself, "But it happened in that order." Know that this is the time to make an ethical choice: Does the order in which you choose to close character's stories jeopardize the truthfulness of the overall documentary?

Multiple endings are also symptomatic of a scat-



tered structure or the filmmaker's unwillingness to let go of certain scenes. If this is the case, just remember that you can put leftover materials in the DVD extras or post them as media clips on your website. Nothing is ever lost.

Epilogues and/or postscripts can also create a false ending if they are badly handled. I recommend that you use the slate credits to separate them from the main story, followed by the end roll credits. If that's

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not an option, make sure a nice long fade-out—or similar device—tells the audience that the story is over and that everything that follows is bonus material.

Finding an ending, settling on one among many, or simply accepting that there isn't one can create anxiety. Paul Gardener assuaged his own distress by believing that "a painting is never finished: it just stops in interesting places." And he was right. After all, whenever something ends, something else begins, giving birth to a plethora of sequels, remakes, and director's cuts. For better or worse, there are really only transitions hiding behind end credits. The idea of something *ending* is merely the illusory result of our linear thinking. ★

*with gratitude
to all readers,
Fernanda.*

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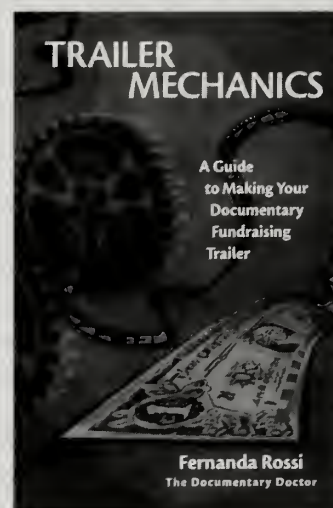
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Fernanda Rossi is a filmmaker and story consultant, author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer. She can be reached at info@documentarydoctor.com.



THE INDEPENDENT

★ INSIDE THE ★

CLINTON CAMPAIGN WAR ROOM



Q&A with Chris Hegedus, Nick Doob, and D.A. Pennebaker

By Erica Berenstein

In 1993, *The Independent* ran a story about *The War Room*, directed by Chris Hegedus and D.A. Pennebaker. The film followed Bill Clinton's 1992 election campaign from inside campaign headquarters. This year, Hegedus, along with Nick Doob, the cinematographer on *The War Room*, released *Al Franken: God Spoke*, an intimate portrait of Al Franken's growing political persona, punctuated by the "Saturday Night Live" brand of humor he is most famous for. The film played to rave reviews at both the 2006 Full Frame Festival and Tribeca Film Festival, among others.

Now, as *The Independent* looks back—as well as ahead—seems like the perfect time to get these three veteran filmmakers back on record. Here they discuss the evolution of political campaigning—from 1993 to now—as well as how the industry of independent documentary making, that they had such a huge hand in shaping, has changed.

Erica Berenstein: In the 1993 interview, *The Independent's* then editor, Patricia Thomson, asked you what George Stephanopoulos and James Carville's motives were in letting you

into the Clinton war room with a camera. You said they 'had an interest in the historical aspects of it...they understand what we mean by history...To be able to see what they are doing from some kind of distance, some kind of outside position.'

Chris Hegedus: I think that's probably the same for Al Franken and why he let us into his life.

D.A. Pennebaker: What's really interesting, and none of us have really dared to give a lot of thought to this, is how much



The documentary avant-garde: Nick Doob, Chris Hegedus, and D.A. Pennebaker



The wise guy of *Al Franken: God Spoke*

did our pursuing him... how much did that count for what he finally did? I think that our being in the room focused James in a way that he wouldn't have been focused if we hadn't been making a film. But you don't know. You like to think that you're not even there, but the fact is you are there. And it isn't you that's there. It's this process. They never saw the process as being a big film. They just saw us as making a home movie. Al, I think, maybe saw it a little differently.

EB: How did you decide to do a film about Al Franken?

CH: He was going around doing these book tours, and he was getting hundreds of people, and something was really happening for him in a way that was never happening before with his other books. And people were incredibly hungry to

hear his message. Al just seemed like he was at a point of change in his life, and those are the points that you decide to make a film about somebody.

EB: The place of documentary films in popular culture has really changed in the 13 years since *The War Room* came out. They're part of popular culture much more than they used to be. Has what you expect from your films changed because of how the public reception of documentaries has changed?

DAP: You know it has changed, because tomorrow in Newark is the big election. And the guy in *Street Fight* is definitely going to win. And I think the film had an effect on that. It certainly got [Sharpe] James out of the race.

CH: [*Street Fight*] has a quote on the box that says, 'the best film since *The War Room*.'

Nick Doob: The whole political atmosphere has changed since then. I mean, there was Whitewater and then there was the impeachment. The thing about all this stuff, "Crossfire" and Rush Limbaugh and all that, is that there is this sort of recklessness with facts. Al is not

that way. To a fault, he's very careful of the accuracy of what he talks about. He loses arguments because of that. He was a good sort of hero for our film. It seemed like the country was going to turn a corner. But it didn't. But Al turned a corner.

DAP: And it may yet turn a corner.

NB: And it may yet turn a corner, that's right. It feels like we're in round two of the same thing.

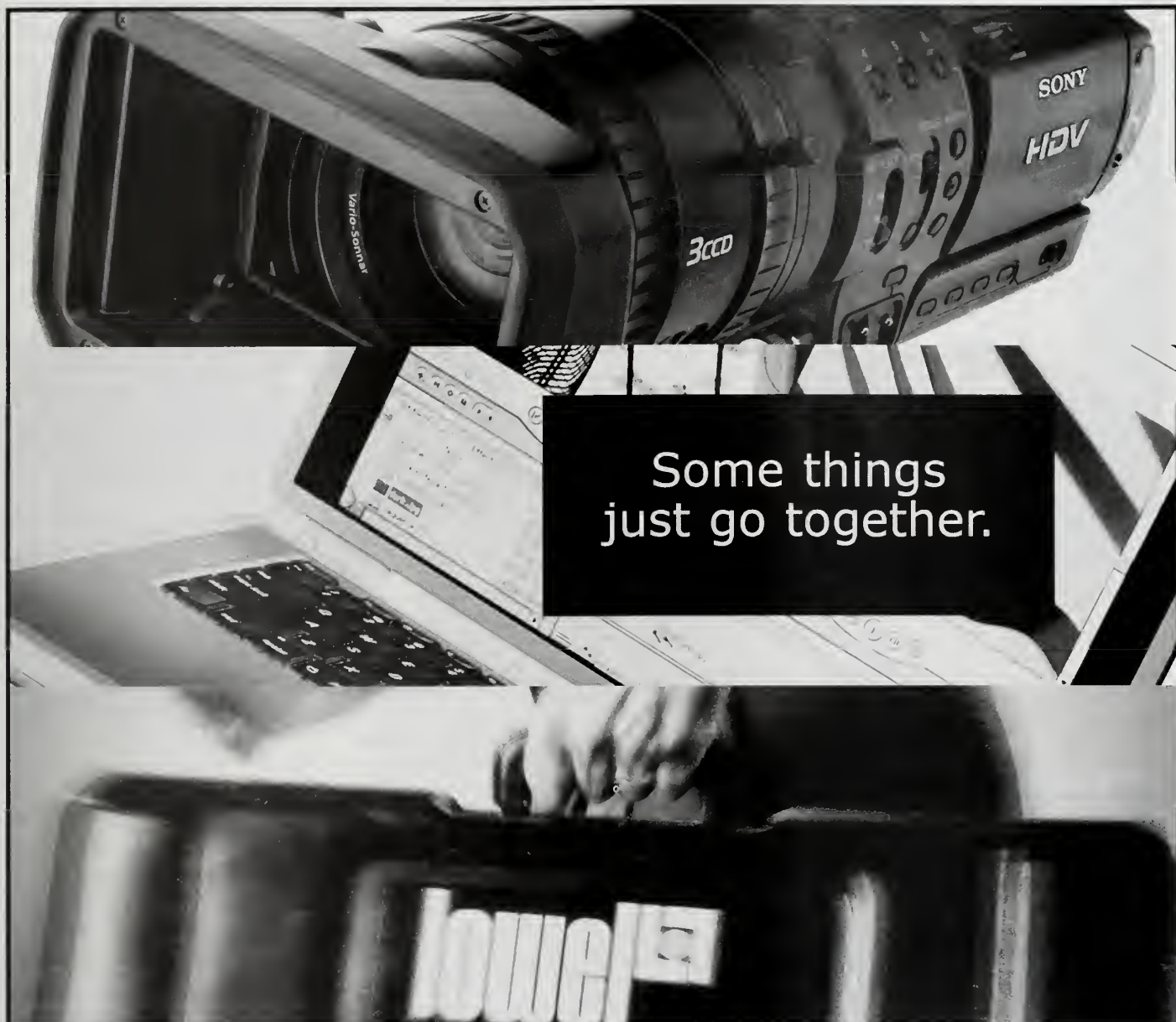
DAP: The steam pressure is really rising.

EB: A friend recently said to me after watching Atom Egoyan's new film *Citadel* at Hot Docs, 'You can't have a defined category called documentary. There is no such thing.'

DAP: As an author, as an originator, is it your responsibility to compartmentalize? Are you supposed to be the one to say this falls into this thing? Whatever your friend said you can't do, I sort of agree; you can't do either.

EB: So would you say that your films are documentaries?

DAP: No. We don't say that.



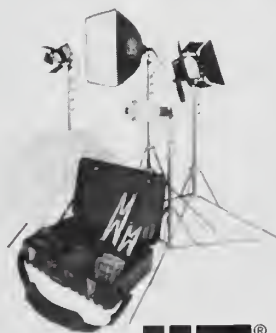
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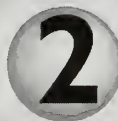
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Somebody else does. What can you do about it?

CH: I think that the reason nobody wants to be boxed in to documentary is because it's not only history. I think you can explore in more interesting ways the convergence of real-life filming, narrative filming, animation, all sorts of experimental film within a film. I definitely don't want to be confined to doing something that is strictly documentary. But I think we still are interested in something that is... in the power of stories about real life.

EB: So, this is kind of flip in a way, but if you don't necessarily categorize your films as documentary films...

DAP: Well we do...

CH: We're kind of flip in our answer...

DAP: We don't really have a lot of choice.

ND: *Monterey Pop* wasn't a documentary.

DAP: It was called that later. Not when we put it out. We never advertised it as such.

CH: Well, they put it in the documentary category at the...

DAP: Well, I took it out! They were going to enter it into the Academy Awards, and I was very excited. I said this is great, against all these big films. And they said, 'No, no. We're going to put it in a special category, documentary.' And I said no. I took it out. The last thing in the world I want is to have a label on it 'documentary.' It would disappear.

ND: But documentaries have changed. In many ways you've prevailed, Penny. Documentaries used to be things that were narrated all the way over, and they had a certain look. It's a much freer way of making films.

CH: There is a power in seeing the real

people, and I think that is what is exciting about seeing the type of films we do and others. Whether you call it documentary or cinema vérité.

DAP: (chuckling) Reality films. In other words, what you're saying is: Is the difference between artifice and reality determinable? Not by everybody.

ND: Nobody in that room knows what is going to happen next in a documentary. That's part of it. There's something very exciting about that. You can get, like with Al, a great performance.

CH: We used to try to avoid it because documentary was the d-word; it would damn your film. It would never get any type of release if you called it a documentary.

DAP: The theaters wouldn't even play it.

CH: They never played documentaries in theaters for most of our career but then documentaries became very fashionable. I think also 20 years ago they attached a lot of significance journalistically to the word documentary and there were lots of debates over it about truth and this and that, and you'd get all caught up in whether it's true. All I know is that when I first saw certain documentary films that were different than any films I saw when I grew up, which were mostly nature films or war films about World War II, I saw certain films that Pennebaker and [Richard] Leacock and [Albert] Maysles had done with Bob Drew, and they were so real to me because they kind of brought back a certain time and situation, and they were very dramatic for me. This seemed a way to make a film that was as dramatic as a fiction film, but it was about real people and because of that it was almost more dramatic because you felt like you were really seeing history in a sense. And I think that these films do touch on history; in that way, it's the point where they segue to documentary somehow. *The War Room* is a record. As a record, it's only one tiny view of those moments in the [Clinton] war room. But it's what remains. *

Blurring the Lines

The boundary between her film—about children with cancer—and her life evaporated when Julia Reichert herself was diagnosed with cancer.



The film stars Al and Regina Fields, above, and Judy and Jackie Loug, right



By Julia Reichert and Steven Bognar

Ohio-based filmmakers Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert's 3-hour and 45-minute documentary A Lion in the House follows five families with economically and racially diverse backgrounds over six years during their fights against childhood cancer. The filmmakers (Reichert started New Day Films in 1971 and both are longtime members of AIVF) recount the fascinating process of making the film, as well as the terrible and ironic twist that occurred as soon as they arrived at Sundance.

JULIA: In early 1997, my partner Steve got a phone call from the Cincinnati Children's Hospital's head oncologist. They were looking for someone to make a docu-

mentary about what families go through when their kid has cancer. They had seen Steve's film *Personal Belongings*, and they knew we were locals. What they didn't know was that my own 17-year-old daughter had just finished her treatment for Hodgkin's lymphoma. It was a year of hell, and our initial thoughts about going back into that world were negative. But after about 15 minutes, we realized it was an amazing opportunity to help end the isolation of people fighting cancer. I would never have considered taking on this film if I had not gone through the experience with my own child.

STEVEN: We started shooting with just one digital video camera, a Sony VX-1000, and called friends to see if we could borrow other equipment. Little by little we fumbled into a professional setup—including one radio mic and a shotgun mic on a boom pole. The boom was crucial because often in hospital meetings many people are speaking from different places in a room, and there's no time to tiptoe over to them. We quickly learned how to pivot the shotgun mic quickly so it was aimed in the right direction, and the boom could then be eased closer to that person. We were always a two-person crew, and in the early days of filming we argued a lot about how to do this work. It was actually kind of bumpy.



Al Fields takes in the view from the other end of the camera

We had different ideas about how we should act as filmmakers in the room. I thought we shouldn't be interacting a lot, and Steven thought we should—that we should be like normal people except we would have cameras and be shooting.

I know Fred Wiseman would disapprove, but I just felt we had to be as real and decent and engaging as we could be. Living in hospital time is like running underwater, and these families didn't need more silence in their lives. Also, I was always hyper self-conscious about overstaying our welcome, and I felt like Julia always wanted to stay way longer than people wanted us there. And you know, in Ohio, where people are generous and polite, they wouldn't tell us to leave.

Despite these differences, it was always the most compelling thing in our lives. We didn't want to be anywhere else. Yet it was something we couldn't really describe to our friends and family; we only shared it with the patients' families, the nurses, docs, and each other. That's one reason why this film really brought us closer.

Someone once asked me if I had ice water in my veins to film some of the stuff we filmed. That comment hurt because I believe an essential part of being a true documentarian is that you film hard stuff and you let yourself feel it, keeping your humanity open to the pain of the situation you are filming. This isn't easy, and it can damage you if you're not careful.

We filmed the moment when Tim and Marietha are told that Tim's cancer had come back. As usual the camera was very close to Tim (our backs were snug against the wall of the small hospital room). Tim started crying. He was only two feet away, and I was holding a lens on him. A voice in my head said, "Put that damn camera down, you asshole, and comfort him." But I didn't put the camera down, and Julia did not put the boom pole down.

We looked at this amazing young man and offered what sympathy we could with our eyes, with brief words. But we kept shooting.

I felt so ashamed of myself afterwards. We told ourselves we weren't obliged to use that footage or we could trim it way down. Yeah, right. Here was a deeply powerful scene, and we were trying to kid ourselves into thinking we wouldn't use it.

A few years later, I saw Christian Frei's great documentary *War Photographer*, about photojournalist James Nachtwey who has shot photos in some of the most difficult circumstances on earth, where people are suffering profoundly. Nachtwey expressed hope that his photos would make a difference, and yet, to my surprise, he also talked about the shame he felt at times.

Hearing this made a huge difference to me: Shame is a necessary check in the process of doing ethical work. The shame should be there—as a measure of your conscience.

Shame never entered into my mind. Our primary reason to be there was not as caregivers, not as friends, though we were those somewhat. We were there to witness, to document, and then to take on the responsibility of sharing that with the world. That meant keeping shooting unless the families asked us to stop.

To me, if we put the camera down at hard times, we would not be doing our job. It took a while to figure this out, that we were privileged to witness some extraordinary human interactions. And witnessing for us meant honestly documenting all the

events and all the perspectives that were part of the things we were observing.

Our kick-ass editing team helped us turn the 525 hours of raw footage into a watchable first cut, which was something like 28 hours long. Then senior editors Kevin Jones and Jaime Meyers were joined by veteran editors Mary Lampson (*Harlan County, U.S.A.*, *Rain in a Dry Land*) and my former partner Jim Klein (*Seeing Red*, *Scout's Honor*). We also had great consulting editors, like Robb Moss, Yvonne Welbon, Austin Allen, Michelle Davis, and Nathaniel Dorsky, who wisely told us: "You must switch your allegiance from your material to the film."

All hell broke loose when we got the news from Sundance. We couldn't believe our good fortune. Weeks earlier, we had joined the annual, national ritual of anxious waiting that thousands of filmmakers do every year. It's a surreal kind of process—we all send in our films and then try not to obsess about it. But one day Shari Frilot called us and told us they were showing the film in the documentary competition.

It was crazy. They had never shown a film that long in competition. From the end of November through early January, our lives were not our own. Julia was tired all the time and feeling a ton of pain in her upper back, but when you're working almost 20 hours a day and you haven't had a day off in months, of course you're tired and aching all the time. I kick myself now that I didn't see the signs that Julia was getting sick—that it wasn't just exhaustion.

In early January, I saw my doctor and got a chest X-ray. A few days later, on Friday the 13th as it turns out, my doc called and said, "There's something on the X-ray, we have to do a CAT scan."

The CAT scan showed a mass in Julia's chest. Our doc said it might be benign, it might be malignant; we have to do a biopsy. This is TWO DAYS before we leave for Sundance.

That day was also the tenth anniversary of my daughter Lela's cancer diagno-

sis. I got the biopsy, and we packed for Sundance.

When we got off the plane in Salt Lake City, I turned my phone back on and there was a message to call the doctor for the results. And there at the gate, standing next to the rows of bucket seats, with everyone pulling their roller bags past us, I heard that I had cancer—a large mass of lymphoma.

First reaction was denial. ALL five fami-



Frank and Jen Moone allowed Reichert and Bognar into their lives and their struggle

lies were on their way to Sundance. None had ever been to a film festival; some had never been on an airplane. They had only seen the unfinished film in their own homes. We decided to wait until after the film had screened—to a standing ovation—to tell these families our news.

We got home from Sundance on Sunday, January 22. We were admitted to the James Cancer Hospital the next day and did not leave for the next three weeks. We soon found out Julia had an exceptionally rare form of cancer for which there was no standard protocol. The survival rate was 18 percent.

What happened next was just about the most scary and intense thing I've ever been through. With the clock ticking and the tumor growing in Julia's chest, we had to choose a course of treatment, knowing that whatever treatment we chose would ultimately be a leap of faith, a gamble. We were told repeatedly that the first treatment you use matters most—that you don't want to pick

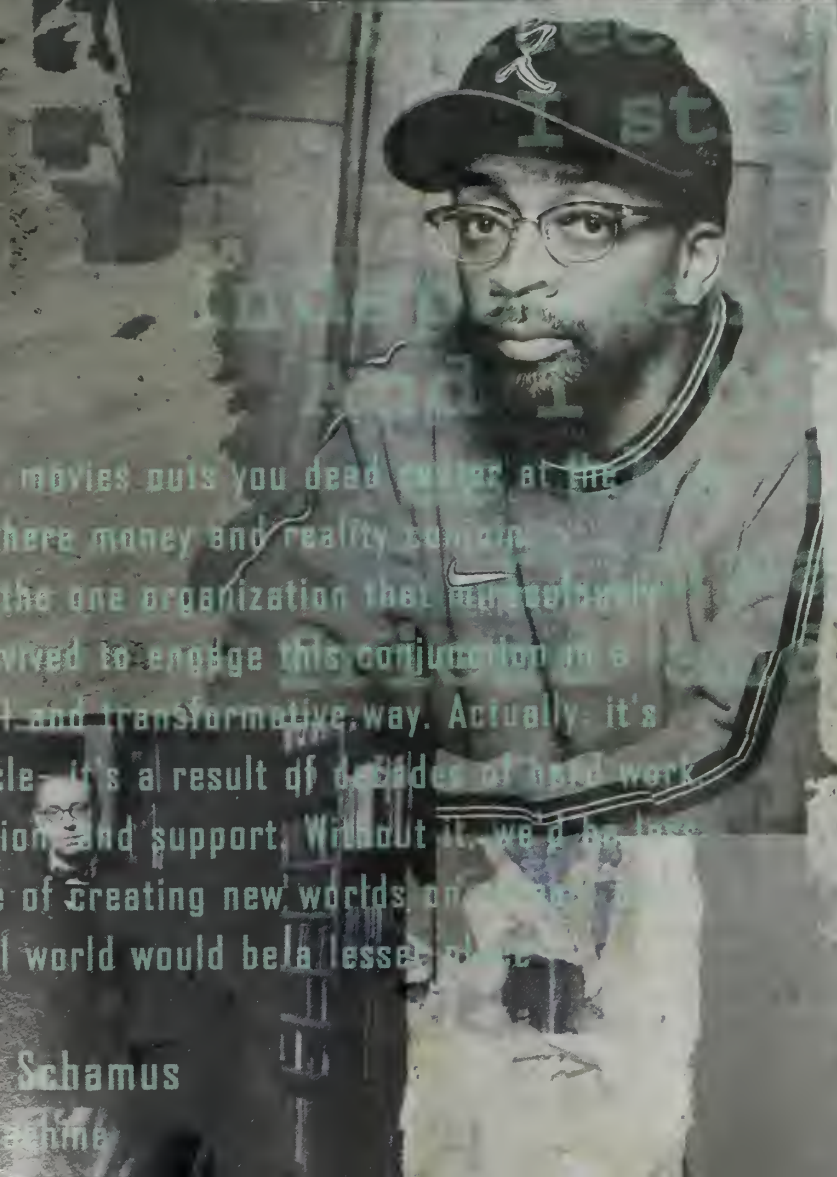
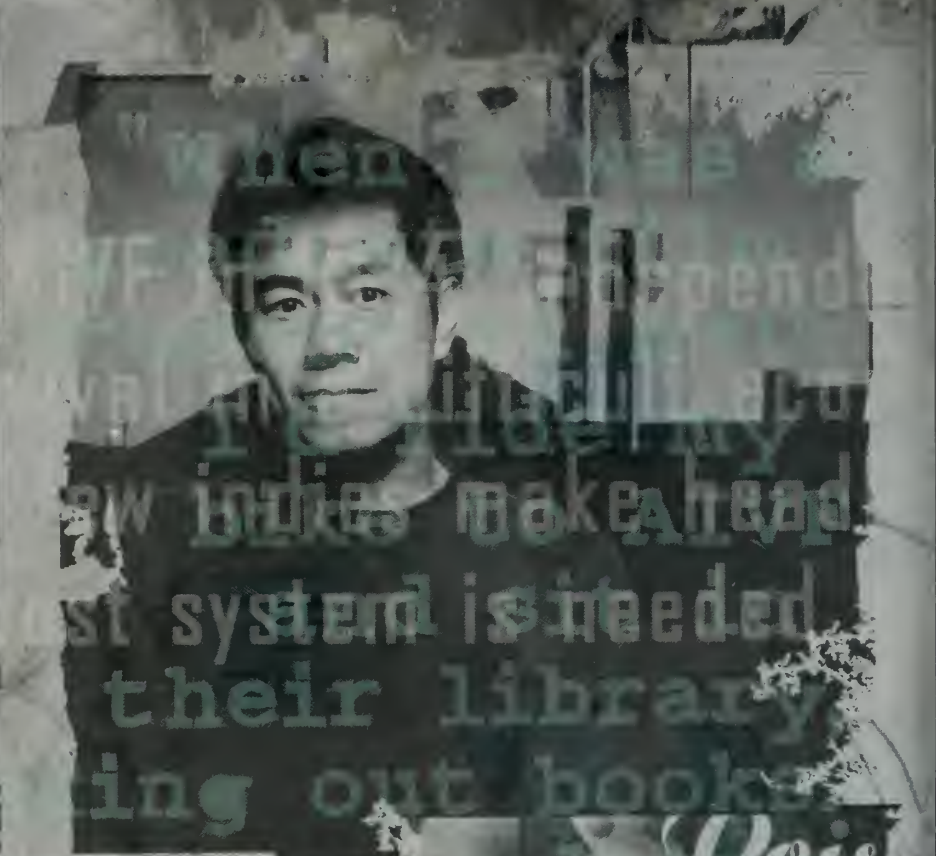
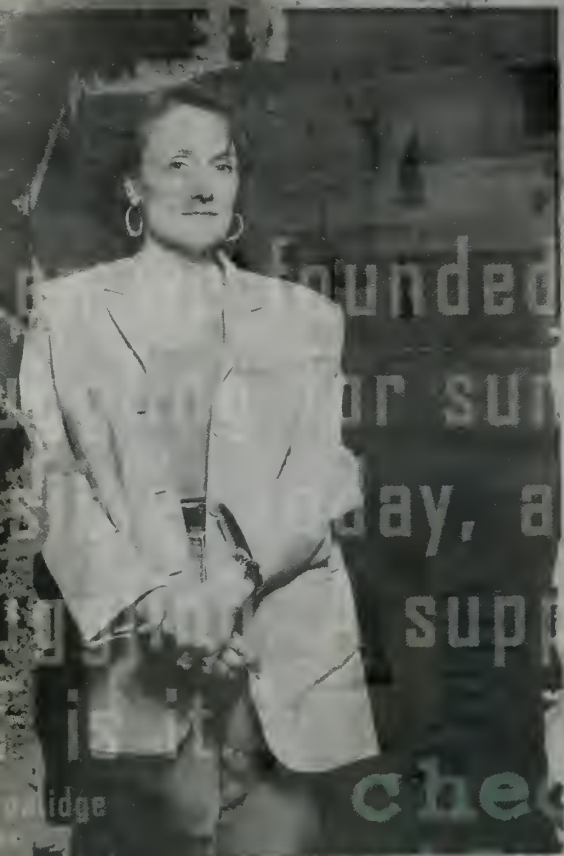
the wrong weapon, as it were, and then be one down in the fight.

Working in documentary trains you as a researcher, interviewer, note-taker, as a judge of divergent viewpoints and as a decision-maker. These skills came in handy. Also, the families of *Lion* were great support and mentors. The years we spent with them made me less afraid and had taught us all so much about being proac-

tive, assertive, and clear. Even though I helped my own daughter fight cancer, it's different when it's you.

About a month later, after round two of chemo, Julia went in for a series of scans, which would determine if and how well the treatment was working. The scans showed her tumors had shrunk dramatically, that she was exceeding expectations. She endured the rest of her chemo rounds and finished two weeks before the national PBS broadcast of the movie. ★

Lion won the Audience Award at Hot Docs, a Special Jury Prize at the 2006 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival and shared the prize for Best Documentary at the 2006 Nashville Film Festival. In June, it was broadcast as a two-part national, primetime special on PBS's "Independent Lens" series. More information at www.lioninthehouse.com. A companion book will also be released with the film. More info about the book at www.orangebrazer.com.



Schamus

Shine

AIVF

association of independent
video and filmmakers

What happened at AIVF over the last 30 years? Coming up with a coherent and entertaining way to answer that question was not an easy task. Instead of recounting the factual history—which would put most readers to sleep—we decided to let the voices (of past and present) speak for themselves. What follows is a conversation of sorts, about the independent filmmaking industry from the beginnings of Super 8 to now, including rarely collected insights—from extreme gratitude to thoughtful criticism—about AIVF’s role along the way.

"After all, it is 1979. Sexism in the media has been around as a topic for at least a decade. If we haven't something new to contribute in terms of abolishing the still rampant sexism in the media, why are we devoting time and energy to plan or attend such a meeting?"

—Ardele Lister, in reference to an AIVF/Women Make Movies panel, 1979

"Merely recognizing the fact that color film fades is useless. We must act now or the films we make in the 1980s will be subjected to the same indiscriminate destruction as all those made in the past 40 years. Working with film stock that is guaranteed to deteriorate in a matter of months is insulting and insane. We have no choice but to take action to correct this situation which is absolutely intolerable."

—Martin Scorsese, letter to the editor, 1980

"Back in 1969, just when portable video equipment was becoming available in stores, I met some people called the Videofreex. It was terrific. We set up a loft in SoHo in the late sixties and early seventies as a video studio and did everything we could think of on tape. We never stopped to think about why we were doing it or whether there was any money in it. That was back in '69. Of course, some people have made millions thinking about whether there was money in it in the years since then."

—Skip Blumberg, 1981

"Although in this age of Atari, cranking by motor a perforated strip of film – the gelatinous emulsion extruded from cattle bones, the cellulose base from tree pulp – through a device mechanically resembling a sewing machine and dunking it repeatedly in tanks of chemical soup before drying and buffing might seem by comparison primitive, the end result justifies the means with a standard image fidelity unmatched by other systems. Simply put: Color negative represents a mature, vital, enduring technology, not to be written off."

—David Leitner, 1982

"The consumer video market is expanding just as the prognosticators promised. This January was a boom month for video stores, as a crush of customers rushed to the cassette shelves, eager to try the VCRs they got for Christmas."

—Debra Goldman, 1985

"Despite SAG's emphasis on its economic motives, the new contract indicates significant changes for a union that has been considered one of the least flexible with independents."

—Lucinda Furlong, 1986

"One other note of extreme caution before you invest in S-VHS: Very soon (maybe in five years) video will be totally digital, and then everything, every format, will change. But that's life with video."

—Bart Weiss, 1988

"Much news footage has been irretrievably lost. For the first 20 years of television news, none of the networks had film libraries per se, even for internal use. When Emile de Antonio and Daniel Talbot asked CBS in 1961 for footage from the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings, 'They thought we were a little strange,' says Talbot. But, he recalls, once the network realized the producers were 'not just some middle-aged hippies' and 'heard the jingle of money,' they sat down to talk."

—Patricia Thomson, 1989

"In the last two to three years, the sheer quantity of work by [Latina] women and the increased opportunities to share contracts and experiences across national boundaries has led to a movement that is changing the shape and the direction of new Latin American cinema."

—Liz Kotz, 1989

"[Michael] Moore-bashing and [Spike] Lee-bashing seemed to rise and fall with their box-office grosses, much like the fluctuations in anti-Japanese opinions in relation to the rise and fall of the U.S. trade deficit. The more tickets sold, the more anxiety about the potential dangers of these films. Why? Here were two hometown boys – Lee from Brooklyn and Moore from Flint – who knew their subject matter with first-hand intimacy. Perhaps too close for comfort."

—Renee Tajima, 1990

Voices *from* *Issues* *Past*

Continued on page 64

The History and Legacy of

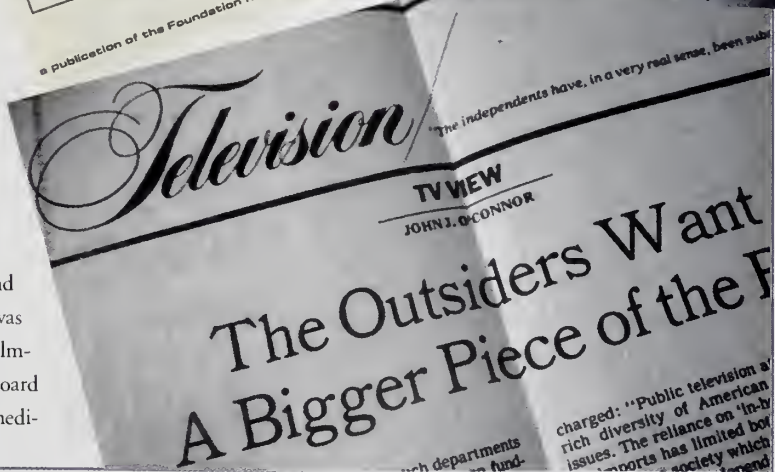
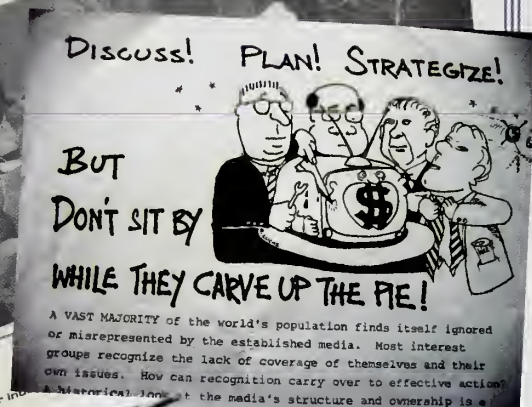
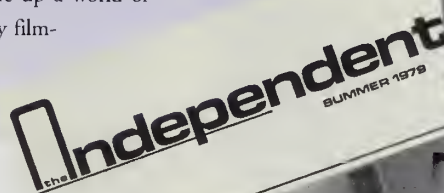


BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

In 1975, when a small group of energetic filmmakers convened the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers in their living rooms and makeshift offices, the word “independent” didn’t yet conjure up a world of arthouses, busy film festival circuits, and documentary filmmakers with household names. The word merely marked this group of earnest, ambitious directors and producers as separate from a small handful of institutions. It was a declaration that they weren’t part of the Hollywood studio system or the television networks, and that they didn’t want a permanent place in the fledgling world of public television. They hoped their title said something too about their values, about their desire to make work that achieved something more than commercial success. They wanted to make films that mattered socially and artistically and to find audiences who would embrace their work.

AIVF was born at a fertile moment for young filmmakers: at the apex of the optimistic frenzy of late ‘60s and early ‘70s, and at the beginning of an explosion of new venues and technologies for making and showing films. The studio system was no longer a monolithic source of well-regarded American movies; increasingly non-Hollywood filmmakers were earning attention as well, thanks to the excitement generated by the nouvelle vague and a budding generation of auteur directors. At the same time, the growing popularity of television on the one hand, and the horrifying coverage of the Vietnam War on the other, led more and more people to see the power of images and to want to be part of their creation.

But like many artists, film and video makers worked in isolation and had few communal outlets for their ideas and enthusiasm. “There was nothing back then for experimental filmmakers,” says documentary filmmaker and media activist DeeDee Halleck, who served on the AIVF Board during the ‘70s and ‘80s. “There was no distribution, no support. The medi-





From top left (clockwise): Barbara Kopple shooting *Harlan County USA*; Jem Cohen's *Buried in Light*; Steven Soderbergh; Tom Dicillo; Kopple receiving her Oscar

um was so expensive. Ours was the first American organization that tried to provide services."

In 1974, John Culkin, then head of New York University's Center for Understanding Media, set out to remedy the situation. He had secured funds that he intended to funnel to independent filmmakers. He recruited Ed Lynch, a cinematographer, to be AIVF's founding president.

AIVF had a steep road ahead. There wasn't yet a public appetite for the work these filmmakers hoped to create. "We had to start from the absolute ground to build organizations and structures, and find funding," says Ariel Dougherty, who had founded Women Make Movies in 1972. "There wasn't even an audience for our films. People said to us nobody wants to see your weird little movies so don't even bother."

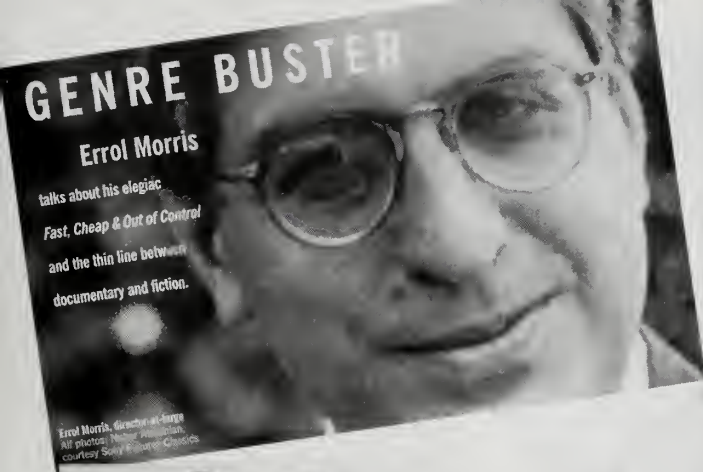
In its earliest days, AIVF was a frenzy of meetings. Thrilled to have a venue in which to discuss their craft and concerns, members seemed to want to get together almost nightly. They organized screenings and set up committees to discuss cable, self-distribution, and membership. But it was in its

fight against the American Film Institute (AFI) that the nascent organization solidified.

In 1975, for the first time, Congress had proposed to fund media makers through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The AFI lobbied to control those funds exclusively, a move that galvanized Lynch and his compatriots. The AFI was notoriously conservative and dominated by old-guard Hollywood types; AIVF argued that the money should be managed through the NEA's normal peer panel process. They were ultimately victorious in 1976.

"It was a shock at the time," says Lawrence Sapadin, executive director of the association from 1980 to 1991. "Nobody had heard of us. It was a real David and Goliath moment."

The late '70s saw more key advocacy victories. AIVF positioned itself against unlikely foes, like public broadcasting, and argued that no one organization should control all the federal or state dollars earmarked for media makers. "It was a very strange position to be in, because PBS was naturally the dar-



From top left (clockwise): Errol Morris; Marlene Dietrich; Spike Lee and Chris McNair; Jonas Mekas and Michael Snow; *The Farmer's Wife*

ling of everybody's parents," says documentary filmmaker Ralph Arlyck, an early board member. "But to us they just looked like part of the same power structure."

AIVF drew attention from these prominent successes, and its members gained confidence. "I remember being amazed that there was some truth to the notion of democracy," says Arlyck. "We were not a power center. We just had an argument to make. It was very surprising to me that you could actually go down to Washington and make yourself heard."

After just a few short years, AIVF had outgrown its makeshift status. It rented an office and capitalized on an explosion in membership. It began to offer services to its burgeoning constituency. "My focus was really the membership," says Sapadin. "We were a trade association. My sense of my job was to make the lives of working filmmakers better. If you weren't interested in advocacy but you needed health insurance, we could do that. If you had trouble keeping up with the changes in public funding, we would have seminars. If you were renting equipment, we could get you a discount. There was a fes-

tival program, and we helped you get your film to an audience."

A magazine was a crucial element in AIVF's expansion. After years as a mimeographed newsletter, *The Independent Film & Video Monthly* was launched as a full-fledged publication in the early '80s. "The magazine had practical articles on legal matters, on censorship skirmishes, contract disputes, emerging filmmakers. It had festival listings that everyone relied on—because none other existed then. Theory and practice sat side-by-side, uniquely, and comfortably," says Pat Thomson, who was editor-in-chief of *The Independent* throughout the 1990s. "What distinguished *The Independent*—and AIVF—was its comprehensive focus. It didn't privilege feature filmmaking, but covered the full panoply: Experimental film, video art, personal documentary, investigative documentary, and shorts were also part of the mix."

The magazine quickly became more than a vehicle for exchanging information. It tied a disparate community of hard-working, often underpaid filmmakers together and drew people who were making media outside New

York and LA into the fold. “The magazine was a real achievement, and it gave many people who were not on the coast or presently producing a sense of the vitality and importance of independent filmmaking,” says Pat Aufderheide, a professor of communications at American University and the executive director of the Center for Social Media. “It gave filmmakers a real sense that they were not just working in another business, but an enterprise that was vital to the public health of the democracy.”

In the mid 1980s, during an era of rapid growth and a burgeoning new slate of services, AIVF took on its most important advocacy initiative. Along with a wide group of collaborators and contact, Sapadin waged AIVF’s slow but determined battle to secure federal funding for what was to become the Independent Television Service (ITVS). The AIVF’s constituency of independent producers had long felt that federal funds for media makers were directed to a small group of insiders. They wanted a separate fund that would be specifically earmarked for filmmakers and governed by representatives of the independent community. For three years, Sapadin and his coalition tirelessly lobbied Congress. “We started to get some traction, which was remarkable because we were in the thick of the Reagan cutbacks,” remembers Sapadin. “We were able to position ourselves not as liberal producers who needed money, but as an alternative to a public TV landscape that was increasingly seen as elitist. We represented something more diverse and locally driven.”

When ITVS launched in 1988, it was seen as a tremendous success. “AIVF had positioned independent filmmakers as major voices on public television,” says Aufderheide, who today serves as a vice chair of the ITVS board. “To this day, independent producers serve as canaries in the coalmine of American democracy, reminding us all of underreported issues like nuclear waste, poverty, and the rights of many of America’s disenfranchised groups, including ethnic minorities and the disabled.”

The ITVS campaign left the AIVF staff drained but optimistic. Surely, if independents could find new monies despite Reagan’s retraction of public funding, they could survive until the pendulum swung back and Congress saw the virtue of fully funding the arts. “All through the period, I had this feeling of stewardship, of guarding these successes for a better time,” says Sapadin. “We believed that we were going to come out of this tunnel and there was going to be a reawakening of interest in the public sector and in the arts. We thought the whole spirit of deregulation would pass.”

To the dismay of everyone on AIVF’s board, arts funding continued to shrink. The Clinton era didn’t register as expansionist, but rather ushered in Newt Gingrich and a Republican-dominated Congress, which did its best to abolish the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and ITVS, and succeeded in making deep cuts. “At that time, AIVF had a strong advocacy committee,” says Thompson. “We were constantly on the phone, calling fellow AIVF members in key congressional districts before appropriations votes in Congress and prodding them to call their reps.”

“We knew we had to defend our gains or else we would lose ground,” says Martha Wallner, who worked as AIVF’s advocacy coordinator from 1990 to 1994.

While AIVF continued to argue for expanded arts funding and protec-

tions for independent media makers, the landscape for independent filmmakers was undergoing seismic changes. “Independent” was beginning to mean something different than small scale and non-commercial. Increasingly, filmmakers were working outside the sphere of public funding altogether. “For its first 25 years, AIVF operated in a world where independent filmmakers had only nonprofit organizations and smaller media arts centers to help them,” says Thompson. “There was no HBO, no IFC. The country’s vast network of film schools didn’t yet exist. Low-cost video and the DIY approach were yet to be born. There were few or no mini-majors or studio arms for lower-budget arthouse films.”

But by the late 1980s, Indiewood was already on its way. Spike Lee’s films were a harbinger of the tremendous success of non-studio movies, a genre

that had attracted the interest of producers like the Weinstein brothers who went on to build the Miramax empire. Independent filmmakers became glamorous and synonymous with interesting and ambitious—but nonetheless mainstream work.

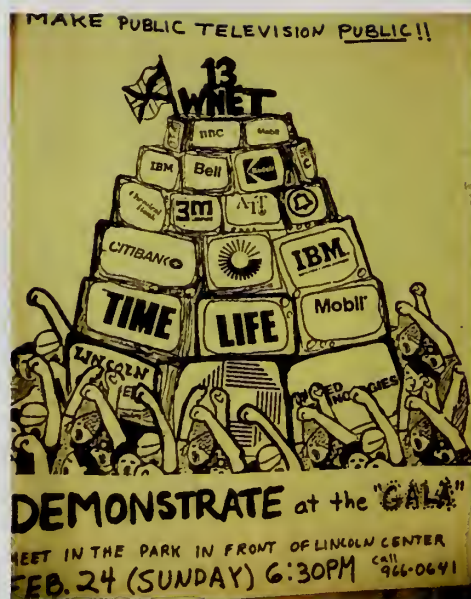
It was a paradigm shift that many old-guard AIVF members resisted. “There is a certain kind of filmmaker that is independent because nobody has bought them out yet. They’re just waiting to sell their film to Warner Brothers. Then there are people who make independent films because they believe in changing the world and they believe their stories are important. And AIVF was really trying to serve that second group of people,” says Bart Weiss, the director of the Dallas Video Festival and an associate professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, who joined the AIVF Board in 1984 and has since served on and off as its president.

Some AIVF staffers and members hoped the organization might learn to adapt to the changes and might prosper along with groups like the Independent Features Project, whose Independent Spirit Awards now rivals even the Oscars with the star power and media attention it attracts. “We were the oldest nonprofit that served independent media makers, but I was interested in giving the contemporary independent community what they wanted, which was more money and attention for their work,” says Rebecca Carroll, who edited *The Independent* between 2003 and 2005. “AIVF had a deeply rooted, grassroots ethic which was wonderful. I hoped it might adopt a more with-it vibe.”

At the same time, the roles that AIVF had traditionally played for independent filmmakers were shrinking. Many of its customary functions were rendered increasingly obsolete. For example, new digital technology undermined seminars and equipment discounts.

“We have to put forth a model that’s an alternative to the consolidation and the commercialization of public space, just as we did with public television and public access to cable,” says Wallner. “People cannot take for granted that they’re going to be able to distribute media online in an affordable way unless people make sure that space is protected.”

“There are some things the commercial space does well, like making toothpaste and making funny comedies, but there are other things that need public protection, like national parks and certain kinds of independent media,” Sapadin agreed. “That’s what AIVF could help us do.” ☆



Flyer for an AIVF demonstration against public TV

aivf and what it meant to me



Barbara Hammer

I first became aware of AIVF when Martha Gever was editor of *The Independent*. I marveled at this national organization that put out each month a magazine chock full of weighty, intellectual and critical articles on film and video. The magazine wasn't glossy and was not determined to be a general "industry rag." At that time I was living in San Francisco, and I thought I would run for the Board and become active. Issues of freedom of expression and the right to use material in creative and personal ways became my platform. Having survived the NEA criticism of the sexuality in *Nitrate Kisses* with their silly demand to take their grant-giving name off of the credits, I felt a responsibility to continue the insistence for artistic freedom.



Karen Cooper

The four weekends a year meeting with the Board became important goal markers of my year. Not only did I develop friendships but I found that under the new leadership of Executive Director Ruby Lerner, the Board would be rewarded for their hard work with talks and discussions from experts in the field. Ruby brought the organization into financial stability and, along with Board Chair Rob Moss, guided us through difficult times while inspiring us with her enthusiasm and inspiration. Besides keeping the membership informed and ready to fight for our freedoms, I was able to convince the Board that students needed reduced membership fees to be able to afford AIVF. I knew from bringing magazines to my class how eagerly they were snatched up and that a lifetime of supporting film organizations could



Roger Weisberg

begin before university graduation.

—Barbara Hammer has been making films and videos, installations and performances for over 35 years. Her new film on the lesbian Surrealist sisters Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore premiered this spring.

AIVF grew from the spirit of the '60s: like-minded people joining together with a common goal. Independent filmmakers were find-

ing out that they might be doing a documentary on Latin America, a personal animated short, or an edgy narrative feature, but still have a great deal in common in terms of the kind of support they needed. It would be a mistake to paint an entirely rosy picture. There were conflicts and rough edges that needed ironing out. But the impulse to work together, to create a progressive, smart and sophisticated professional organization was—and is—admirable. I have the highest regard for AIVF's goals and accomplishments.

—Karen Cooper has been the director of Film Forum, New York's leading nonprofit cinema, since 1972.

Trying to make a living as an independent filmmaker is difficult at best. AIVF makes that job a little easier and considerably more enjoyable. As a producer/director, I find that it's easy to become so absorbed in my own productions that I lose sight of the broader community of filmmakers. AIVF connects me to my colleagues and makes me realize that hundreds of other filmmakers share my experiences, struggles, and occasional triumphs. It's also comforting to know that a powerful ally is my court. Whether it's lobbying Congress to protect public television, holding workshops on the latest video technology, explaining the newest developments in the distribution of independent media, or announcing the screenings of its members, AIVF is always there to promote the interests of independent filmmakers. Of course, no month would be complete without reading *The Independent*. This indispensable magazine regularly gives me a sorely needed dose of enthusiasm for the work I do every day. In short, being a member of AIVF helps make me crazy enough to want to continue producing documentaries for a living.

—Roger Weisberg has produced and directed 25 documentaries that have won over a hundred awards including Emmy, Peabody, and duPont-Columbia awards.

When I first started to work on *Born into Brothels*, I didn't know anything about producing films. Really...nothing. Incorporation? No. Insurance? Not one clue. Releases. Producing. Copyright. Music clearance. Distribution. The list went on.

But luckily I found out about AIVF and its weekly seminars on all aspects of film production. I attended the seminars regularly and met



Mitko Nikard in *Born into Brothels*

some great people who helped me tremendously. And I learned enough to not get into too much trouble (legal and otherwise) while producing the film. The information I got from those seminars and those contacts helped me come out whole (with my wallet and sanity intact) at the end of the process.

Even though *Born into Brothels* has gone onto great success and I've been able to carve out a career as a filmmaker, I still have a lot to learn. But AIVF gave me a great head start. For a truly independent filmmaker with limited knowledge and few contacts in the industry, AIVF was a blessing.

—Ross Kauffman is the director, producer, cinematographer, and co-editor of *Born into Brothels*, winner of the 2005 Academy Award for Best Documentary.

It was 1997 and I had this notion that I'd get Texans into theaters to see my documentary about killers of gay men. A statewide tour of *Licensed to Kill* — that's what the film needed to get the message out to a region that had one of the highest rates of anti-gay murders in the nation. You see, I was a victim of stereotyping and had dreaded visions of having to wrangle longhorns and cowboys into theaters. Remember, this was pre-*Brokeback* and the "d" word was still verboten. Lucky for



Cauleen Smith

me AIVF was there with a human contact.

AIVF Board president Bart Weiss, who also headed the Video Association of Dallas, got me rolling and helped me realize that, counter to my preconceived ideas, there was indeed a documentary audience in Texas. I ended up traveling with the film to five cities. Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, San Antonio.

Out of my theatrical rollout in over 50 cities, the Texas tour was the most gratifying; it validated my reasons for being a filmmaker and distributor. Some folks question whether AIVF matters to members outside of New York City. Well, from my point of view, AIVF was really never about the Big Apple, but about getting independent work made and out there, no matter where. Thanks AIVF for staying the course and providing real world maps!

—Arthur Dong is a triple Sundance winner and Oscar nominee, and has been selected for film fellowships by both the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations.

AIVF smashed those golden gates. I'm talking about the invisible barriers between artists and their communities, artists and their audience, artists and other artists, artists and the means of production. Institutions, as they expand and grow, can so easily fall into the trap of exclusion rather than inclusion. Suddenly, without anyone noticing until it's too late, these institutions are surrounded by the gilded gates of their own self-importance.



And then there's AIVF. Here's an institution that celebrates the accomplishments of their members as their own success. They don't wait for members to come to them, they find ways to draw folks in. I was one of those lucky filmmakers who was embraced, supported, and inspired by AIVF.

As a fledgling filmmaker, I read the articles about stalwart makers

with awe and tried to absorb their power through the thoughtful and insightful text that allowed the artists to articulate their process and created space for the insights of the writers charged with discussing their work. Then I made a movie that people seemed to like and AIVF published what is still my favorite article about the piece.

AIVF is not only a model for an institution, it's a model for community building of all kinds. It's a way of making the world the way we

want it, rather than succumbing to the world in ways that's comfortable for those who like it the way it is.

AIVF, for opening your arms, and never building gates, for opening my mind and leaving my checkbook mostly alone, and for including me because of my work and ideas rather than as a placeholder for race and gender, I thank you.

—Cauleen Smith is an

assistant professor at the University of Texas at Austin where she teaches experimental film and a comedy class sponsored by National Lampoon.

Twenty years ago, I used to drop by the AIVF offices and comb through the library or stare at the bulletin boards. I might've been looking for info on grants or copying a number from a tacked up index card about a Super 8 camera for sale. But I was also there to confirm the existence of "independent film," and AIVF served as a junction for its many divergent streams: docs, smaller features, experimental work, etc. These broke off into various differing, sometimes contentious, components, but they still shared something apart from and opposed to what Hollywood was all about.

Working at the time on crews, often for studio features, I'd come to realize that the world of big-time filmmaking had very little to do with any belief in cinema as an art form and a mirror of life as regular people lived it. AIVF catered to a different world, and I thought visits to their office might somehow lead me to that elusive thing known as community. I'm not so sure that ever happened, but that may just be because the kind of filmmaking I ended up doing is a largely solitary pursuit.

However, looking back over old issues of *The Independent*, I'm reminded that "community" did and does exist, more as a spider web than a close-knit group that could be instantly "joined." There's Chris Smith and Sarah Price over there, talking about *American Movie*, there's Steven Bognar demonstrating the microphone setup that he and Julia Reichert refined in the field; there's an article sorting out the intricacies of time code, or the tax code as it applies to freelancers...

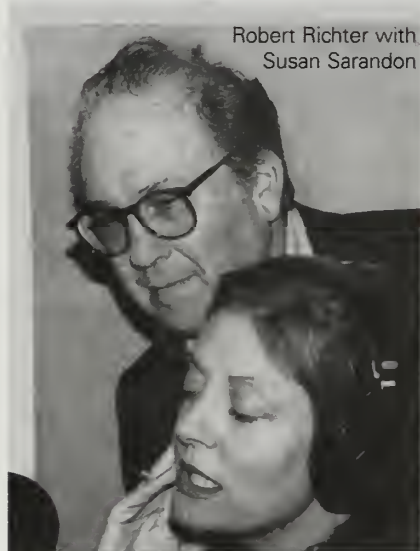
Many things have changed, but the need for proof and support of this sometimes elusive Un-Hollywood community is still crucial, and we still face some of the exact same issues. One example: In an issue of *The Independent* from 1990, I find an in-depth article on fair use. This year I went to a meeting celebrating the important release of "The Statement of Best Practices on Fair Use," and was pleased to see AIVF listed as one of the contributing forces. The fight to define and maintain fair use is indicative of just the kind of combined research, advo-

cacy, community-building effort that AIVF has, and should continue to be, a part of.

—*Jem Cohen's feature, CHAIN, had its international premiere at the Berlin Film Festival and was broadcast in Europe on ZDF/ARTE. His other films include Benjamin Smoke, Instrument, and Lost Book Found.*

Back in 1977 I went to a meeting held at the Great Hall in Cooper Union, about plans to create the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers. By then I had been an independent for about ten years, after producing for the Edward R. Murrow/ Fred Friendly unit at CBS, and for Oregon and Iowa public television.

In 1981, the year after I was elected to the AIVF Board, Larry Sapadin, a lawyer and one-time film student in Paris, became executive director and I was elected AIVF Board president.



Robert Richter with Susan Sarandon

For a few years AIVF ran the Independent awards, giving out I-shaped metal chunks resembling a thin slice of railroad track. The award ceremony was at the Museum of Modern Art where I presided, with Spike Lee and Jim Henson among the presenters.

Independents were beginning to be noticed. Two weekly series produced by independents from all over the U.S. were funded by CPB for primetime national PBS telecast in 1981 and 1982: "Crisis to Crisis" and "Matters of Life and Death."

On the AIVF Board we began to try to figure out how independents could survive. In an AIVF committee that I chaired we dreamed up what ultimately became the Independent Television Service (ITVS). But as the victory and our role in it faded in memory, AIVF lost members and financial survival became central to AIVF's agenda. We used to fantasize that if only we had another crusade, AIVF would come out fighting and even stronger.

—*Robert Richter's newest film is The Last Atomic Bomb (see review in this issue).*

She was actually selling them out on the street. The first issue of *The Independent*. Her name was Suni Mallow. This was in the early '70s. She seemed very intent and not particularly smiley. I forget the exact street; somewhere downtown. I also can't remember why we spoke. Since I wasn't carrying a camera it's unlikely she spotted me as a likely prospect.

I thought of this a few weeks ago when I was handing out leaflets in Union Square Park for my doc feature, *Following Sean*, which was about to open at Cinema Village around the corner. We have clearly not come such a long way baby. I was there as part of a street team made up of my sons and their friends. Our distributor has very little money for advertising and I was told that in most cities, if I wanted the

Ralph Arlyck



film to live beyond its opening weekends, we'd have to come up with innovative ways of spreading the word. Thinking outside the box office we could call it. So we went to Union Square on a sunny Saturday and stopped people who didn't have both hands clutching produce bags.

This kind of guerrilla marketing, although it turned out to be a lot of fun, is not the most dignified of activities. When your feature opens in New York you'd like to be someone who demurely permits himself to be interviewed by Charlie Rose or NPR, rather than the guy standing out there leafleting in the middle of a farmer's market.

But AIVF members tend to know that calls from high-profile talk shows, not to mention funders, don't come often in the beginning of a career. In fact they don't come all that often later on. One can find oneself "emerging" for quite some time. You can moan about it but it's better to do so in the company of others and to find different ways of getting the films made. My sense is that AIVF has always struggled with the balance between those poles of mainstream competence and fringe energy. To pull it off well you have to draw from the strengths of each extreme, and the organization probably hasn't been doing that so skillfully lately.

I have a filmmaking friend who places great store in professionalism. To him the AIVF has always been a caricature of amateurism. A bunch of raggedy beginners with minimal skills and crossover dreams. I think this is a harsh and too-comfortable view.

I don't want to over-romanticize those early days on the wooden folding chairs in Soho (endless cranky meetings) but I do remember that when we went to Washington in '78 to make a case for more access to PBS funding that it was precisely our "amateur" (the root of which is "love" after all) enthusiasm and non-corporate style which got the attention of people in Congress. I don't think most of the congresspeople and their aides had ever seen anything quite like us. It was exhilarating. M

—*Ralph Arlyck's most recent film, Following Sean, has been featured in numerous international festivals. He has produced and directed more than a dozen prize-winning, independent films.*

WHY WE(STILL) NEED AIVF

BY DEEDEE HALLECK

When I started to write this article, I began with a David Letterman-esque list of 20 reasons we need AIVF. I included practical items like “to get a job,” “to fill out an IRS schedule C for an unincorporated business,” and “to find out which film festivals are scams.” But the real reason we need AIVF is to find each other. We need to know where we are. We need to locate ourselves in the framework of art and culture in this society. Without this “locator,” we are nowhere.

My experience with AIVF goes back to the mid ‘70s when a few of us gathered in Ed Lynch’s loft on Leonard Street in Tribeca. At that time most of us were working in 16mm film. Video was a gleam in Nam June Paik’s eye, and an over-the-shoulder accessory for a few Videofreex.

We banded together to protest the elimination of NEA grants. We went to Washington and fought for independent media. As the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, we were more than a few disparate individuals—we were a group taking a stand for our rights, dignity, and funding. The fact that we were a national association helped us win the NEA fight.

In the beginning, our hub was under the priestly robes of Jesuit radical John Cullin and his Center for Understanding Media. Once we got our own 501c3, we opened an office on Prince Street, conveniently located near the Soho post office and McSorley’s Bar. We grew in numbers, and we printed stationary, and we started a regular newsletter, *The Independent*, which progressed from mimeographed and stapled sheets to a printed magazine with the help of a young Canadian journalist, Ardele Lister.

We got CETA (Comprehensive Educational and Training Act) money and hired a full-time staff. Then we went to Washington again—this time for public television. “The Outsiders Want a Piece of the Pie,” was how the *New York Times* put it. Our membership grew with that struggle, from a few hundred to several thousand in almost every state. We joined forces with other media advocacy groups: the Citizens Communication Center, the United Church of Christ, the Committee to Save KQED, the AFL-CIO, the NAACP, the Consumer Federation, National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Latino Media Coalition, National Association of Lesbian and Gay Filmmakers, Black Producers Association, Puerto Rican Institute for Media Advocacy, Women Make Movies, Asian Cinevision, and many others to form the National Task Force on Public Broadcasting. (AIVF was the lead organization in that coalition.) We testified at committee hearings and educated senators about independent media. We inspired media centers and



universities to host informational meetings in dozens of states.

We wanted to protect the right of artists to create and of audiences to view works of art from a diverse range of perspectives. The ongoing series, “POV,” grew out of that struggle. Soon after, AIVF, along with other media centers and independents around the country, initiated ITVS, the Independent Television Service, which is still the major funder and gateway for independents on public television.

In the last 25 years, independents have made significant gains in production and distribution, and there are now numerous channels for our work on cable and community stations. Local PEG (Public, Educational, and Government) access studios provide high-quality digital cameras and editing software in many communities. Indie media has been a potent mix of independent visual media, radio and internet creativity, and information. But many media centers are teetering on the brink of ruin. Venues for experimental film are few and far between. Independent distribution entities are hurting. The demise of LAVA (Latin American Video Archives) signals the fragility of independent media organizations.

We still need AIVF. We still need to locate ourselves. We need to continue to demand funding, screening venues, and airtime—no matter what the apparatus, no matter what the format. We need to ensure that ITVS continues to be proactive as the Freedom of Information Act is whittled away. Bills in the Senate and Congress threaten both the internet and community access. Our national heritage of public media is being privatized at the Smithsonian. Independent journalists are being specifically targeted in brutal wars in the Middle East and Africa. Independent media makers need to continue to speak out with diverse voices, united for media that challenges the corporate mainstream in form and content. We still need AIVF to say: “We are here.” ★

LOVE'S LABORS LOST

A lot of what AIVF did was to create an interface between very diverse communities of independent media makers and audiences that work structurally through the realms of public television. Not just public TV a la NPR and PBS, but also public access to media spaces like Collective for Living Cinema, Film/Video Arts, Millennium, and Anthology. It circulated a lot of people through those spaces who could then claim some kind of relationship as a community. AIVF acted as a kind of hinge between all the different spaces and vectors of activity.

As those vectors of activity morphed and changed, you saw that, structurally, the identity of AIVF came under increasing pressure. First off it came under pressure from the more careerist portion of that community, like me, people who entered the marketplace as the so-called independent film scene became a market, and the vector where the lines crossed started coming closer to the independent film market.

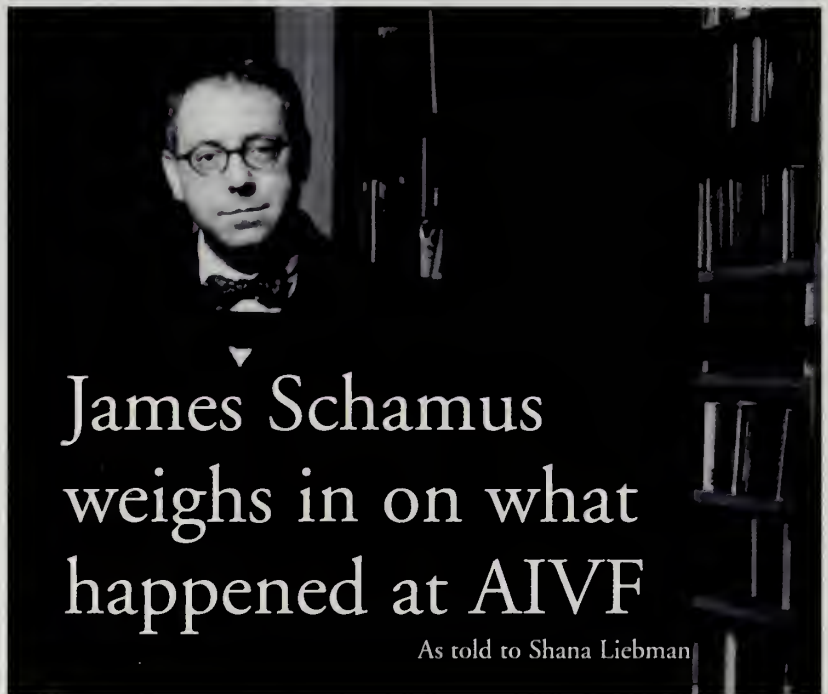
There was also this transmigration to the internet of a lot of the knowledge base and conversations. AIVF never had the capital; it certainly had the will, but it never had the working capital to integrate itself into a digital environment. One of the reasons for that was that AIVF could never sell its goods to the corporations that were replacing community groups. So it didn't have a rationale for corporate support.

The only alternative was ratcheting up the organization as a pure digital play, which I think, in many ways, was antithetical to the kind of notion of human contact and community that drove AIVF. The idea that people actually mingle was still part of the culture of the organization, but given all these circumstances, this really hampered it.

The second opportunity was always present and part of the culture, but it never became AIVF's *raison d'être*. This was activism. AIVF never made its focus media activism, and it never transformed into a more articulate and informed media activist group that really was engaged in the politics of things like the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

After the ITVS fight, the membership saw real substantial results from a real political organization that leveraged its visibility and knowledge and its vocal relationship with structures of power in DC. The ITVS battle showed that we could succeed, and it created standards for success that were both exciting as well as disappointing. AIVF never became a venue for those kinds of debates.

Part of the problem has to do with locating a concept of professionalism. On the one hand, AIVF was an organization that facilitated the training and socialization of media makers into a professionalization process. It helped people who wanted to make activist media that was of a certain—and here's where the problem is—level of accomplishment (i.e. had some kind of economic logic that allowed for the makers to support themselves while doing it.) So the demands for support: "We deserve to get paid for our work," and "We deserve a place on the PBS landscape," were simultaneous, and in some ways neutralized what was happening with the rise of cheap digital video and video activism. So now you have two very competitive ideas about independent media: one that rightfully says that we should do this well and apply standards of professionalism, and the other one that says, just pick up a fucking digital video camera and join the parade; get it online; get a MySpace page or whatever. How do you recon-



Around since the get-go, Schamus has a unique perspective on AIVF

cile those two things especially with institutional logic?

I still think that the potential demise of AIVF is precisely the argument for why it is needed. The new challenge is finding what could possibly bring together this incredibly diverse range of communities all doing independent media. What could help them band together to create a community that actually intervenes successfully and pinpoints ways that they all agree, even instinctively? A lot of what AIVF got done and done well was the result of unarticulated, untheorized, and undiscussed needs. It just kind of happened.

The problem is that a lot of the steps that need to get done require some kind of policy wonk thinking. What is happening right now in terms of internet access and what telephone companies are going to try to do to the internet is astonishing. It's astonishing that all of us aren't totally together on this, that there isn't one place to go where we can speak out. Maybe it's going to take another round or two for the digital marketplace to organize itself in a way that people start to see themselves as publishers of their work and as having an investment in that. But by the time that happens, it may be a little late in the day. ★

GETTING PERSPECTIVE

AIVF's interim executive director's view from the inside

BY LINA SRIVASTAVA

When I came to work with AIVF in February, I don't believe the Board or staff could have predicted that AIVF's situation would spark a debate about the possible meltdown of an entire industry.

AIVF's Board retained me through a referral from the Support Center for Nonprofit Management, charging me to maintain the organization's operations following a change in leadership and to rebuild systems that had fallen into disrepair. Being a newcomer to this industry (I am a lawyer and nonprofit management consultant, not a filmmaker or media arts professional), I was able to assess AIVF's viability as a business in isolation from larger industry questions. After working with the Board and staff for a few weeks, we all quickly learned how deeply troubled the organization really was. Its operational systems, accounting and financial support, and technological capacity were all outdated and barely functioning.

Although aware of the internal and external difficulties facing the organization, neither the Board nor the staff wanted to go down without a fight. So we've searched for long-term solutions and necessary resources, and we started on the task of devising necessary changes to AIVF's service model. We also sought an influx of cash via donations or earned revenue, to help us finance necessary changes in infrastructure as well as programs and services. More importantly, additional financial resources would enable us to lay the groundwork for a long-term plan to revitalize the organization in a way that engaged the community and articulated AIVF's mission—namely, to service and improve the professional lives of independent media artists. Reaching these goals, though not impossible, has proven challenging.

As Brian Newman, Jim McKay, and Anthony Kaufman have discussed, AIVF's problems viewed against larger industry problems look even more challenging. Nonprofit organizations regardless of their service area are facing leadership, staffing, and budgetary problems—and a push to act more like their for-profit counterparts. Nonprofits must protect the “bottom line” in terms of maximizing the quality of beneficiary services while meeting standards of efficiency, fiscal soundness, and innovation in their fields. Any nonprofit focused on improving its performance must possess the foresight to adequately size its budget, retain qualified personnel, and enter into worthwhile partnerships in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, all the while keeping an eye on income opportunities, industry trends, and technological innovations. A tall order. Now throw into the mix the fact that only a few donors will fund a nonprofit's efforts to improve its organizational



capacity, preferring to fund programs alone.

The nonprofit media arts industry is dealing with its own challenges, which complicates AIVF's task, but has made the question of the organi-

zation's survival that much more crucial. The field has changed radically in the last 5 to 10 years. Independent media artists are working in the midst of a cultural chill brought on by repressive, pro-consolidation media policies. One of the most recent and disturbing examples of this has been the creation of Smithsonian Networks and its alliance with CBS/Showtime, an alliance that threatens artists' access to primary source materials [see page 39]. On the other side, the for-profit media sector has made a successful foray into the field. That's not inherently a bad thing: Responsible for-profit players bring a great deal to the table for artists, primarily in terms of distribution and access to technological innovations—and artists and nonprofits alike could benefit greatly from exploring collaboration. But for-profit companies are not set up to support independent creators of art or media. Truly independent media and film is already hard to find.

If the nonprofit media arts movement does indeed “die,” who will protect the makers of the medium? No matter how much foundations and activists push to reform media policy, it won't mean anything for the American cultural landscape if artists can no longer fund or disseminate their works. If there exists a compelling reason for AIVF to survive and reinvent itself—or for any other organization that works in the realm of nonprofit media arts—it is to protect independent media artists and their ability to do their work. ★

Now & Then

A forerunner on 40 years of Super 8

BY TONI TREADWAY

Long before Super 8's 40-year march from home movie to Kodak's hot new kid, long before camcorders, and long before desktop editing and filmmakers like us needed information, Bob Brodsky and I were pleased to have Super 8. When we began filmmaking in the 1970s we used it more often than 16mm to make community documentaries and short films. It was lighter, cheaper, and Kodachrome looked great.

So, in order to help others evaluate new products and services, we tested equipment and wrote monthly columns detailing what we learned for *Filmmakers* magazine until its close in 1982. Not long after, we got a call from AIVF's Kathleen Hulser (the strong-minded but gentle-to-us editor of *The Independent*) and Larry Sapadin (AIVF's ace director/strategist). They talked us into continuing the column for *The Independent*.

By that point, we had started giving workshops on Super 8 at media art centers around the country. Our articles chronicled the vitality we found in indie media across the U.S.

After home video arrived in the '80s, manufacturers and the press jumped over each other to ballyhoo products. They wanted us to buy a new camera every couple of years as video improved: VHS, Video8, Hi8, VHS-C, digital camcorders, and finally computer editing. For some reason, a small group of us kept on filming in Super 8: Saul Levine up in Boston, Albert Nigrin with a dedicated festival at Rutgers. Super 8 filmmakers made up the avant garde in music videos—Kelly Reichardt shot the first one we saw; Jem Cohen was one of the best.

Jeff Preiss made exquisite 8mm films—a Bolex poked out of his backpack. The Cinema of Transgression gang in lower Manhattan, the Taller del Cine La Red group in San Juan, the Flicker movement all over contributed to a trend in camera style and risky subject matter that influenced filmmakers from Berlin to Hollywood. Risk-taking was

emotional, too. These filmmakers often used their own family movies to create works in the evolving "personal documentary" genre long before first-person storytelling was bankable.

Although times have changed, we still need to protect and promote these smaller films, the artistic works, the home movies—they need to be gathered and shown carefully, to be annotated and preserved. The industry has gotten craftier, absorbed more styles, co-opted stories, and demanded output in lieu of insight and research. More than ever, we need to stay connected in order to get the quieter marginal voices heard in our noisy world—something AIVF once helped us to do. ★

Toni Treadway and Bob Brodsky wrote a tech column for The Independent for nearly 10 years and are advocates for the creation and preservation of 8mm and Super 8 films. www.littlefilm.org



Brodsky and Treadway wrote a column on Super 8 for *The Independent*

AMERICAN HISTORY

Do filmmakers hold the key to our nation's attic?

BY ERICA GINSBERG

With more than 25 museums and research centers and a collection of more than 142 million objects, the Smithsonian Institution is a necessary treasure trove for anyone working on a project about American history and culture, anthropology, art, or science. Countless filmmakers have turned to the Institution for background research, access to artifacts and documents, and to secure interviews with top experts in their respective fields.

In March, the Smithsonian announced it would partner with Showtime Networks to develop Smithsonian On Demand, a cable service that will feature original documentaries drawn from the assets of the Smithsonian. While documentary filmmakers could have been pleased that there would be another potential outlet for their work, the overall reaction was not positive. Within a month of the announcement, 215 documentary filmmakers, archivists, historians, professors, broadcasters, and professional associations that represent librarians, historians, and filmmakers composed a letter to the Smithsonian that asked for the terms of the deal to be made public and for any contract to be annulled until public hearings could be held. The signatories were a virtual who's who of documentary film, including Ken Burns, Michael Moore, David Grubin, William Greaves, R.J. Cutler, St. Claire Bourne, and recent Academy Award nominees Alex Gibney, Kirby Dick, and Gerardine Wurzburg.

What disturbed most of the filmmakers was that the agreement mandated, according to reports in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, right of first refusal to Smithsonian On Demand for any commercial documentary project that required "more than incidental" use of Smithsonian resources.

The questions flew. What does "incidental" mean? Would any proposals that wanted more than "incidental use" be sent to Showtime for vetting? Did "commercial" include PBS or the internet? But none of these questions could be answered definitively as the agreement wasn't made public.

The Smithsonian claims that, because it is a private business contract that contains proprietary information, it is under no obligation to



Nina Seavey found this archive for her film, *A Paralyzing Fear: The Story of Polio in America*, in The Smithsonian

release the terms of the agreement. Watchdogs of the federal government disagree. Although it's not a federal agency, the Smithsonian Institution receives 75 percent of its funding from federal monies.

Carl Malamud, an internet radio pioneer and fellow at the Center for American Progress, submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the details of the agreement. He also organized the petition letter to the Smithsonian and an April 18 public forum where Ken Burns voiced his concerns about the Smithsonian On Demand deal. "This is not us against them," said Burns. "The Smithsonian is not the enemy. We love the Smithsonian. We depend on them. We just feel those involved made a mistake."

Most filmmakers who have experience working with the Smithsonian agree. Laurie Kahn-Leavitt relied greatly on the Smithsonian for her 2003 film *Tupperware!*. Paul Wagner's 1984 Academy Award-winning film *The Stone Carvers* was co-produced and co-directed with Marjorie Hunt, a folklorist employed by the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Both filmmakers have had positive experiences with Smithsonian staff but worry that, had their films been made today, their use of Smithsonian resources would be considered "more than incidental." Both films ultimately screened on PBS.

"I appreciate the fact that the Smithsonian is under difficult financial circumstances and needs to raise money," said Paul Wagner. "I think it's fine if they want to develop projects with a commercial entity, but they can't cut off access to materials that were given to the Smithsonian and held in trust there for the American people, not Showtime."

"It's not like filmmakers mooch off them," says Kahn-Leavitt. In fact, filmmakers pay pretty significant daily filming fees, which cover the costs of electricity, security, and staff costs associated with escorting the crew. In the case of Kahn-Leavitt, she not only paid the fees, but also helped strengthen the Smithsonian's collections by encouraging many of the early Tupperware salespeople she interviewed to donate their collections to the Smithsonian. She worries that even the percep-



The Smithsonian Institution's first secretary, Joseph Henry, in front of the Smithsonian Castle, the administrative offices

tion of an exclusive deal with Showtime sullies the Smithsonian's reputation as the nation's public attic. "It seems that for a public institution to be so secretive and not public-minded about the way they are doing this is missing the bigger picture of what their mission is."

While the Smithsonian wouldn't comment on Kahn-Leavitt or Wagner's films, they maintain that a number of past series would not be affected by the venture, including Ken Burns' 1999 series *Jazz*. The Institution insists that the Smithsonian On Demand agreement would not impact access to background research and suggests that non-Smithsonian On Demand projects that rely on "more than incidental use" can still be approved on a case-by-case basis. Between March and May, the Smithsonian received more than 40 requests from documentary filmmakers and only two were turned down. Smithsonian spokeswoman Claire Brown maintains that most future rejections will occur for the same reasons they always have. "It could be inappropriate content. It could be artifacts or expertise we don't feel we have. It could be focused on an audience that quite honestly is not a priority for us because someone else might be asking us to get involved with a project with a much larger audience," she says.

"That represents a paradigm shift," says documentary filmmaker Nina Gilden Seavey. "People give their papers to these public institutions so that scholars, students, and filmmakers can go to them as part



Carl Malamud and Ken Burns discussing the issue

of the American experience. Never before have the people who have managed these collections ever talked about controlling access to them." Seavey has produced and directed a number of independent historical documentaries as well as four commissioned works for the Smithsonian. She is also the director of The Documentary Center at George Washington University and often encourages her students to look to the Smithsonian as a resource for their films.

While Seavey never had to submit requests for her past projects, she has noticed that there is now a lengthy filming request form that must be completed. It asks not only for basic information about what, when, and how the filmmaker wants to shoot, but also whether the project is being produced for cable, broadcast, or the internet, who is funding the project, who will own the copyright, and what organizations or individuals will receive the program's gross and net proceeds. Brown explains the requirements as necessary for an organization with the limitations of and as in-demand as the Smithsonian. "One person can only give so much time to a project. If there's a choice between doing projects which reach four million people and help advance our mission or ones which reach 100,000 people, we're going to take the one that's four million."

Malamud sees the issue as more than just a matter of available resources. It is about the lines between different kinds of media becoming increasingly murky. "What happens to the video blogger who lives in Washington DC and wants to pop in to the Smithsonian with a couple grand and make a little movie to distribute for free or distribute it using BitTorrent and Pay Pal?" asks Malamud. "This contract buys into the big media view of the world and that world is changing." *

At press time, there were indications that the concerns of stakeholders about the Smithsonian On Demand deal were having an impact. The two ranking members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the Smithsonian's federal funding openly criticized the access issues and secrecy surrounding the Smithsonian On Demand agreement, and the Subcommittee proceeded to cut \$5.3 million from the Smithsonian's proposed budget. The Smithsonian Board of Regents, which includes Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, Vice President Dick Cheney, six congressional representatives, and business and arts leaders, met to discuss the deal and the concerns it raised, but concluded that the contract was acceptable and that it did not limit access to most legitimate filmmakers. The full Appropriations Committee proceeded to cut the Smithsonian's requested funding by \$15 million.



Keith Aoki, James Boyle and Jennifer Jenkins's *Bound By Law* examines intellectual property law—comically

WHAT'S FAIR IN FAIR USE?

BY STEVEN C. BEER AND MELISSA A. CLARK

When writer/producer Amy Sewell sold *Mad Hot Ballroom* to Paramount Classics, the company refused to release the film until she cleared the rights to all the music, including incidental background tracks. Sewell ended up spending half of her budget obtaining clearances—not to mention countless hours tracking down copyright owners. In addition to cost, Sewell admits that she compromised quality—for example, she was forced to end one scene early when someone on set turned up the radio.

Ten years ago, fair use—a portion of U.S. copyright law that allows the use of copyrighted material without permission from the rights holder in certain situations, such as reporting news, critique, or for educational purposes—protected many filmmakers. Recently, however,

there has been so much more confusion (as well as a new generation of critics) about how and where fair use can be applied, that many documentary makers, like Jeffrey Tuchman, who has taught at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and directed *The Man from Hope*, have gone so far as to cancel projects because rights issues had become "so extortionate."

Fair use has been a part of copyright law for more than 150 years—although the application of the doctrine is constantly evolving. It began as a common sense concept created by the court system and was incorporated into law by the Copyright Act of 1976. To determine fair use, four factors are examined: (1) the purpose and character of the use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for the copyrighted work.



The intellectual property comic book published by Duke Center for the Study of the Public Domain (and below)

Most careful production lawyers would say, as a general rule, non-fiction filmmakers must clear each and every source included in a film. But some authorities, like Patricia Aufderheide, a professor in the School of Communication at American University and director of the Center for Social Media, disagree. Aufderheide believes that Sewell didn't need clearance for the majority of the tracks in her film. Recognized copyright experts, legal scholar Hugh Hansen and Judge Alex Kozinsky, agree. In fact, many think that fair use may benefit filmmakers more than is generally recognized. According to James Boyle, a professor of law at Duke University, the real impediment to filmmakers are private actors and practice, not the law, who sometimes insist on unreasonable demands for clearance.

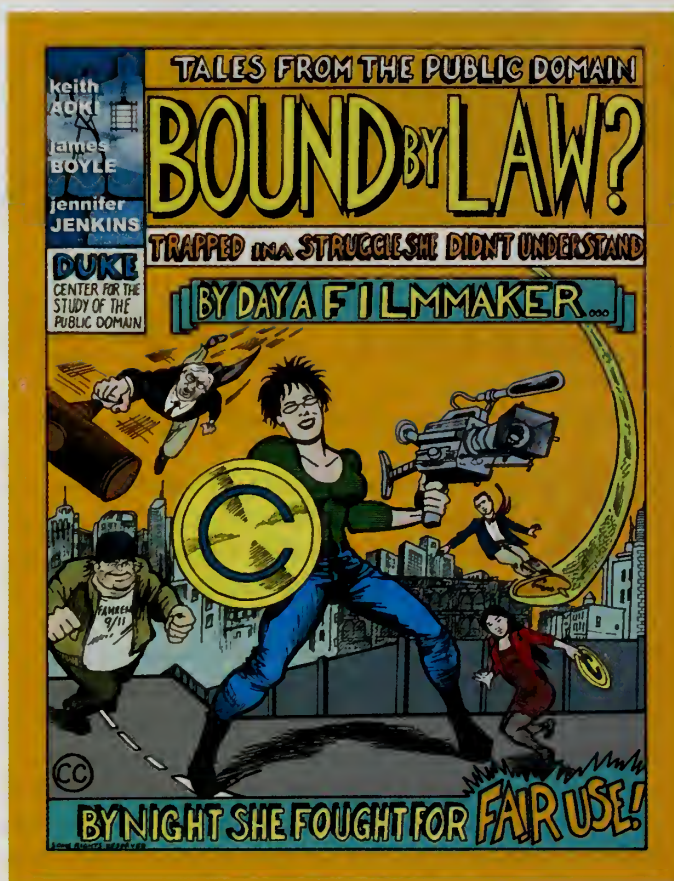
But until the terms are clearer, many distributors are afraid to confidently deploy fair use. Keith Beauchamp, director of *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till*, asked his distributor for a fair use application for the video archives he used in the film. His distributor, ThinkFilm, refused and instead advanced him monies to pay for clearance fees. The film was consequently very expensive to produce, which ran counter to Beauchamp's avowed purpose of "trying to work for the better good and uplift humanity."

The key to fair use is establishing a clear definition for how the doctrine should be applied. To this end, in November 2005, a group of media organizations, filmmakers, and academics published "Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use." The Statement defines four classes of situations, each with its own principles and limitations. They are: employing copyrighted material as the object of social, political, or cultural critique; quoting copyrighted works of popular culture to illustrate an argument or a point; capturing copyrighted media content in the process of filming something else; and using copyrighted material in a historical sequence. A

filmmaker can consult the Statement to determine whether the material in question fits into one of the classes and then take into account the protection offered.

At least two films at Sundance 2006, Byron Hurt's *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* and *The Trials of Darryl Hunt*, directed by Ricki Stern and Anne Sundberg, used the statement to clear festival rights, dramatically lowering costs and enabling release. Among the organizations that have endorsed the statement are the Arts Engine, Bay Area Video Coalition, CINE, Doculink, Electronic Arts Intermix, Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, National Video Resources, and Women Make Movies.

But the debate is complicated. When confronted with clearance issues, it is strongly advised to speak to a professional. A lawyer may recommend getting a clearance and paying a higher fee for a broad license at the outset if there is a potential for wider distribution in the future; it can be very expensive to renegotiate after a film receives publicity. If you approach a clearing house or the copyright owner before doing the proper research, they will monitor the material even more closely—almost certainly ensuring a higher license fee or a copyright infringement suit down the road. Each situation must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis, but you can save time, effort, and money by not waiting until the end of your process when your budget and time are limited or gone. ★



Images courtesy of Bound By Law



BY BRIAN NEWMAN

Filmmakers know well the perilous process one needs to undertake in order to use clips or outside footage in a film—including researching rights to determine public domain, determining licensing costs, and meeting qualifications for fair use. Often, however, a filmmaker finds that he or she can't track down the owner of a particular clip. Perhaps the original filmmaker was not known or never registered his or her footage. The clip then becomes an orphan work.

Photos, books, plays, music—nearly any work can become an orphan. Filmmakers most often encounter the orphan works issue when using film clips, but they might also have trouble tracking down the owner of a song for a soundtrack or the creator of a photograph they want to show in their film. The filmmaker might search diligently, but under current law, a rights-holder can surface later and claim he or she deserves to be paid for the use of the work. This seems fair at first, but if a rights-holder surfaces after a work is distributed over television, internet, or in theatres, the rights-holder might want a lot more money than if the film only played a festival or two. Furthermore, this film probably wouldn't be able to acquire errors and omissions insurance (E&O) and thus a distributor.

Most filmmakers don't want to steal anyone's work or to use it without proper payment, especially because the same thing could happen to them. Many times, however, it's impossible to find a copyright owner—he or she simply no longer exists. Should one then curtail creativity just because he or she fears a rights-holder might surface ten years from now?

In March 2005, the U.S. Copyright Office asked for proposals on



A fire insurance industrial film from 1924 is one of many orphans

how to deal with this issue and then made recommendations that Congress is now considering. The Copyright Office's request was a positive development—it was a chance for creative artists to work together to develop policies, rather than just reacting to proposed changes. In fact, several groups that work with independent filmmakers quickly formed a coalition to propose procedures for dealing with orphan works: The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Doculink, Film Arts Foundation, Film Independent, Independent Documentary Association, Independent Feature Project, National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, and National Video Resources (the group managed by this author). The coalition is advised by Jennifer Urban, the director of the USC Law School Intellectual Property Clinic and her students, and it receives crucial support from attorney Michael Donaldson and Gigi Sohn of Public Knowledge. The Coalition proved, as Urban noted, that, "Congress



A still from an amateur film circa 1920 purchased at a yard sale, re-sold on eBay, and is now in Anke Mebold's hands. The Orphan Film Symposium worked with Anke and the Library of Congress to make a preservation master in 35mm and a screening copy in 35mm.

has taken note of filmmakers' concerns as artists."

The Coalition drew up a set of principals for best practices:

1. A "reasonable efforts search" should be required—simply, someone should work diligently to find a copyright holder before using a work.
2. There needs exist a clear cap on liability costs or damages should a rights-holder appear after a film has been made and/or distributed.
3. There should be no injunctive relief. Should an owner surface, he or she would not be able to pull a film from distribution.
4. If there is no cap on damages, then reasonable compensation must be defined by law. It should be clear how to determine the "fair market value" of a work, so that filmmakers aren't stuck negotiating.
5. Rules must apply to both noncommercial and commercial works. (This line is often blurry and can change overnight if a film is "discovered.")

On April 6, 2006, June Cross, an assistant professor of journalism at Columbia University and a documentary journalist, testified to the Senate on behalf of filmmakers represented by the Coalition. "One piece that has escaped is the often-seen footage of the Black Panther Party going through their paces in Oakland during the sixties," she told the Senate. "Associates of mine have spent months trying to find the person who shot that footage to no avail. We have no idea where it came from. When we use it, we claim it is public domain, cross our fingers, and hope for the best. We try not to use too much of it, lest the grandchild of the person who shot it comes after us."

Cross's testimony seemed to help crystallize the issue for senators. In fact, her thoroughness was noted by the Senate, which has since asked

her to document this process more fully. The Coalition is currently working with Cross on developing a more detailed proposition of practices for orphan works.

It will also circulate information on this project to their members and even send some filmmakers to the Hill to educate Congress so that it may craft appropriate legislation. Unfortunately, elections are on the horizon, and it is unlikely that legislation will reach the floor for a vote during this session.

Perhaps the most beneficial outcome of the orphan works dilemma is that the success of the Coalition has encouraged filmmakers to come together on other policy issues that could severely impact them, such as net neutrality, the Smithsonian/Showtime deal, and WIPO Broadcast treaties. "Generally speaking," Urban warns, "the big studios and tech companies are in the Beltway, and their voices are being heard. Filmmakers need to know that Hollywood is not necessarily speaking on your behalf. They need to leverage their voice to affect these issues."

The problem is that each organization represented can only take on so many advocacy duties. A permanent home is needed for advocacy—a central resource for information, an organization (or simply a person) that can lead the building of such coalitions in the future. This was once the role of AIVF, and filmmakers have never needed an advocate like AIVF more since the time of its founding. Let's hope that someone else picks up the baton. ★

Text of other proposals submitted to congress at www.copyright.gov/orphan/. Full details on how to stay involved are at www.publicknowledge.org/issues/ow.



TRAFFIC CONTROL

On the ugly effects of the corporatization of the net

BY JONATHAN RINTELS

"This internet may be dying."
—FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps

Indie filmmakers have long dreamed of avoiding the high cost and creative compromise that can come with the Faustian bargain of a distribution deal. And these days many see the evolving broadband internet (high-speed, low-cost, and utterly pervasive) as the answer to those prayers. No more clueless, tasteless, penny-pinching suits mucking up my film! No more exorbitant distribution costs, gatekeepers, and bottlenecks! No more warping my work to sell popcorn!

Unfortunately, that broadband-internet-distribution nirvana may never come to pass due to the Supreme Court's June 2005 decision in the *FCC v. Brand X* case, and the regulatory and legislative activity it spawned. Andrew Jay Schwartzman of the Media Access Project, a public interest law firm specializing in media issues, says the case, "will, quite literally, determine the future of the internet as we know it."

The outcome of this battle is especially crucial for independent media artists. Thanks to recent inventions like iTunes, BitTorrent, and improvements in streaming media, independent films (as well as music and TV) are already rapidly becoming

"internet." As broadband speeds accelerate, so will this trend.

Daniel Myrick, co-director and co-writer of 1999's micro-budget hit *The Blair Witch Project*, illustrates digital media's potential to shrink production and distribution costs with his new project, *The Strand: Venice CA*. Each "webisode" of this digitally filmed ensemble drama can be viewed online in streaming video, downloaded for later viewing, or purchased on DVD. The writing, directing, acting, music, and production values are all professional quality, and the first few episodes were done on location for a total budget of \$75,000.

"You've already got the largest distribution network in the world on your desktop, and the end-user experience is getting better every day," Myrick says. "Unlike a Fox show that needs three million viewers a week or it's canceled, I only need a fraction of that and I can be filming forever. At Sundance, we were the only ones out there not looking for distribution."

The question is: Will Myrick's model be sustainable? In a highly controversial ruling upheld by the Supreme Court last year in *Brand X*, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) decided cable companies were exempt from "common carrier" regulation. The FCC then extended that exemption to telephone companies' DSL and fiber broadband service.



For many low-budget films, like *The Strand*, above, the internet is an utter necessity

All this regulatory mumbo-jumbo means that the cable and telephone companies that provide broadband internet service are free to control all content over their wires before it reaches their customer. They can discriminate or block websites. They can degrade one website's video stream in favor of another that pays them a fee for carriage. They can offer only a "proprietary" internet of favored websites. If a customer types in a website, these broadband gatekeepers have the power to divert him or her to another website, presumably one that pays the provider a fee for diverting the customer.

Will these companies use—and abuse—this power? Consider the remarks of Ed Whitacre, CEO of AT&T: "How do you think they're going to get to customers? Through a broadband pipe? Cable companies have them. We have them. Now what they would like to do is use my pipes for free, but I ain't going to let them..."

In a competitive marketplace, Mr. Whitacre's wish to control and extract tolls from the companies whose content flows over his broadband "pipes" wouldn't matter so much because his customers could choose to go elsewhere. But according to the FCC's July 2005 report on High Speed Internet Access, in December 2004 approximately 94 percent of Americans subscribing to high-speed internet access received it from their local cable or telephone company. Today's reality is that for many

broadband consumers, the marketplace isn't competitive.

Recently, the FCC issued a "Policy Statement" expressing a preference for "Net Neutrality"—open, "neutral" broadband networks that give consumers the freedom to surf anywhere they please. But many criticize the statement as unenforceable and full of loopholes that would not prevent cable or phone companies from exercising gatekeeper power.

Meanwhile, cable- and telco-supported legislation working its way through both the House and Senate would further weaken these already insufficient FCC Net Neutrality provisions. Many advocates, including the Center for Creative Voices in Media, are calling on both the FCC and Congress to guarantee the right of Americans to access the entire internet over broadband.

For filmmakers like Myrick who hoped that broadband would give them more distribution autonomy, the outcome of *Brand X* may simply be that they will have a new internet distribution partner to contend with—their friendly neighborhood cable and telephone companies—who, despite their different suits, may be more powerful than ever. ★

Just before this printing, a bipartisan majority on the House Judiciary Committee passed the "Internet Freedom and Nondiscrimination Act," which would use antitrust law to protect Net Neutrality.

Jon Rintels is the executive director of the Center for Creative Voices in Media and has been a member of WGA west since 1982. www.creativevoices.us.



Internet-savvy Daniel Myrick (right) gives instructions to cameraman Mike Marshall

TOWARD A POST-THEATRE AGE: THE FUTURE OF

BY DANIELLE DIGIACOMO

DISTRIBUTION

BROKEBACK	3:30	FEB
FINAL DESTINATION 3	11:15	
GOOD NIGHT GOOD LUCK	4:45	7:2
MATCHPOINT	2:55	7:10
MUNICH	3:00	6:10
OUTDOORSMEN	SOLD	
THE KATACOMBS	4:50	7:10
WALK THE LINE	4:00	7:10
Patrons must be 18 yrs old or older		
No children under 6, unless accompanied by an adult		

For years, the holy grail of independent distribution was Miramax. Then mid-sized companies like ThinkFilm, Magnolia Pictures, and IFC Films emerged around the millennium, while mini-majors such as Sony Classics formed to compete with the Weinsteins. Meanwhile, smaller, mom-and-pop operations, trusted for their integrity—Kino, New Yorker, and Zietgeist—inhabited a less flashy, but still important place on the distribution landscape. And those are just theatrical. The pot of gold for documentarians has long been HBO, followed closely by Showtime, and the Sundance Channel, with cable giants like A&E and Discovery also sporting their own documentary arms. But the distribution structure is continually morphing, theatrical release and television broadcast are quickly becoming

outdated. With Netflix, MySpace, video-on-demand, and download-to-own, our models for consumption are rapidly changing, and the future, judging from the wide range of experts' predictions, is still undeterminable.

Molly Thompson, head of A&E IndieFilms, the cable network's new feature documentary division, believes the social experience that has defined the movies for the past century will never fully be replaced by home technology. "It is the filmmaker's passion to see their work in front of an audience," she says. But Marie Therese Guirgis, until very recently the head of acquisitions at Wellspring Media (Genius Products, owned by the Weinstein Company, shut down Wellspring's theatrical unit at the end of February), argues that theatrical may indeed become extinct and perhaps sooner rather than later. "People in



Independent filmmakers currently have more options for self-distribution than ever before

the industry have wanted theatrical to die for a long time. It is the most expensive form of distribution, and companies usually lose money, which they make up in TV and video," she says. But she adds that many of the people buying DVDs for video stores or other distribution outlets are "still beholden to a notion of theatrical release as arbiter of success. It's not gonna die in the next couple years."

"The theatrical run of a film in nearly all cases, even studio films, isn't where money is made on movies," says Agnes Varnum, a documentary consultant who programmed a panel on distribution at this year's Newport International Film Festival. "It fuels the after-market of video-on-demand, DVD, hotels, airlines, etc. Even indies without that kind of push, but perhaps [with] a good festival run, can fuel their own long-term buying in their niche market. The idea of 'long-tail' is that you find your niche market, but that it takes time, viral marketing, search engine maximization, *and* a film at a consumer price point."

One of the many new companies using internet technology to revamp film viewing is BitTorrent, a peer file-sharing network for media (music, television, films) used by 65 million people worldwide. The company's mission, according to Director of Communications Lily Lin, is "to become the leading platform for people to publish content online." At a panel on distribution at the Tribeca Film Festival, BitTorrent COO Ashwin Navin argued that this new form of decentralized distribution via download technology could free the consumer from, among other barriers, geographical limitations.

Surprisingly, a week after that panel at which BitTorrent positioned itself in opposition to Hollywood, the company announced an agreement with Warner Brothers Home

Entertainment Group to make their mainstream studio films available for purchase through BitTorrent. While this doesn't exactly shut the independent filmmaker out of the equation, it marks a disturbing pattern where visionaries attempt to radicalize media, only to merge with and be tamed by Hollywood's centralized model in the end. The more positive way to look at this though is that Big Hollywood has finally decided to join the visionaries in making their content available to more people through alternative channels. And BitTorrent insists that they are still geared toward the independent community as much as they are toward studio power players. "Almost 90 percent of movies don't ever see theatrical release. We want to be the ones to showcase art for people," says Lin.



ThinkFilm's Mark Urman predicts more change for distribution



A Tribeca Talks panel on distribution (from left): Georg Szalai, *The Hollywood Reporter*; Steven Soderbergh; Ashwin Navin, BitTorrent; Todd Wagner, 2929 Entertainment; Dean Garfield, MPAA

ClickStar, Morgan Freeman's high-profile start-up formed in July 2005, will also release films, albeit big-budget ones, via a broadband download tool. CEO James Ackerman says the company was created to "facilitate the industry's move into digital distribution and to provide a means to make it easier for consumers to buy than to pirate movies off of the internet." Though the company proclaims to be about "A-list," it is also cultivating a documentary channel backed by another celebrity: Danny DeVito, and his new distribution company. Jersey Docs, will provide the content for ClickStar. "The most dynamic element in consumer enjoyment of entertainment is the growing opportunity for consumers to choose when, where, and how they enjoy their entertainment," Ackerman says. "The theatrical experience will always be important to a segment of the population as new distribution channels emerge."

Guirgis is a bit more skeptical that this trend of "cutting out the middleman" will give independent films bigger audiences (That middleman being one with a job such as her old one.) "The hope is, we think, that people really will have a chance to choose to see any obscure movie from Africa. We want to think if we take away people thinking for people, there will be an outlet for these films, but we don't know," she says. IndiePix CEO Bob Alexander cites Roger Ebert's Overlooked Film Festival as proof that people *will* want to watch these obscure African movies. "Every cinema is packed with diverse people, from graduate students to farmers. The audience is not who we think it is." The future of distribution, he continues, is in the filmmakers' hands. If filmmakers insist on hanging on to the idea that theatrical is the only way, both producers and consumers will lose out.

Other experts are less sure of any definitive trajectory. "It is

changing so quickly," says ThinkFilm's Head of U.S. Theatrical, Mark Urman. "There have been more dramatic changes in the film industry and community in the past four years than in the 100 years preceding." The biggest change, he goes on to say, is that "people used to see movies over time—the largest group of people saw movies in the third and fourth months of distribution. Now these months are about the DVD. The question is: Do I wait a few weeks or a few days for Netflix?"

Urman also points out that the quality of many high-end home theatre systems is better than what can be found in many cinemas. And because the majority of Americans do not live within a convenient distance to independent cinemas, methods that bring movies directly to the home, and the simultaneous release of DVD and theatrical, will be crucial. "With TV and DVD, Americans can curate their own entertainment. This is preferable and more cost efficient. I can't swear that 10 years from now, it will start with theatrical," Urman says. "There is an insane proliferation of avenues and venues—we need to be open to any permutation."

"I am willing," Thompson says, "to embrace whatever medium can assist me in maximizing the audience." Though she is unsure which model will be most successful or lucrative, she believes that "everyone is going to have to become a lot more experimental in finding new ways for films to get to audiences." And this generation is more equipped than ever. Because more young people are "used to DVD and tech-savvy with V.O.D.," says Guirgis, "there is beginning to be a radical shift in not only how films are viewed, but also what constitutes a movie." "People feel nostalgic, but technology is transforming our lives," Thompson reminds us. "People used to have to stand in line for mail at the post office too." ★

Letter from the Board

AIVF's Future Uncertain, Efforts Underway to Continue *The Independent*

In the March issue of *The Independent*, we reported that AIVF faced a financial crisis and an uncertain future. As of this writing (June 2, 2006), AIVF is in the process of closing down operations and vacating its office space. At the same time, long-term supporters in the independent community are organizing later this month (June) to assess whether a core group of champions can take over hands-on management of *The Independent* while also reinventing and relaunching AIVF as a membership organization with a renewed emphasis on advocacy.

Whether or not AIVF is ultimately able to continue as an organization, we are hopeful that *The Independent* will continue as an information resource and voice for the independent community. While long-term supporters are regrouping to assess whether the magazine can be taken on under AIVF auspices, AIVF's transitional board has also

been exploring the option of having a like-minded successor organization take over publication. With the assistance of a consultant with expertise in small press magazine publishing, we have created financial models and initiated conversations with a handful of interested independent media groups. Chief among our concerns with any potential successor organization is a commitment to *The Independent's* core values: advocacy to promote and protect diverse independent voices, information exchange and community support for independents, and excellence in the art and craft of independent media making.

We extend our thanks to all those who contributed to AIVF's recent emergency fundraising appeal. Although we did not reach the short-term fundraising targets that would have enabled us to reenvision and transform AIVF operations, your contributions are supporting the possible continuation of *The*

Independent in print and online. In addition, thanks to the dedicated work of our interim executive director, we have rectified AIVF's past financial management problems and the organization is now up to date with IRS tax filings. Without this time consuming and unglamorous work, we would not have the option of perpetuating *The Independent*, or holding open the possibility that a hands-on group of supporters will be able rebuild the organization.

We also extend our gratitude to the AIVF staff and board—past and present—and everyone who contributed to this special legacy issue highlighting some of the important stories, voices, and moments in independent filmmaking since AIVF was founded.

AIVF Board of Directors
June 2, 2006

FESTIVALS

By Marshall Crook

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org.

A FIRST SUNDAYS COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL

Deadline: ongoing. A monthly festival featuring the best in comedy and short film/digi/animation followed by an after-screening networking event. An ongoing festival held the first Sunday of each month at the Pioneer Theater in New York, First Sundays is the premiere opportunity to showcase work and meet talented directors and other indie dv/film folk. Cats: short (under 20 min.), comedy, animation/dv/film. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: (email) film@chicagocitylimits.com or website: www.firstsundays.com.

ANCHORAGE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Dec. 1-10, 2006. Deadline: Sept. 1, 2006. America's northernmost independent film festival is in its sixth year. Categories: Features, shorts, super-short, animation, feature doc, short doc. Format: Review copy on VHS or DVD (NTSC ONLY, DVD may be in PAL.) Fee: Priced by category. Contact: Anchorage International Film Festival 2006 3211 Providence Drive - Library - AMIPA

Anchorage, AK 99508-4614 USA. www.anchoragefilmfestival.org/2006/.

BARE BONES SCRIPT-2-SCREEN FILM FESTIVAL

Oct. 4-8 (2006) Tulsa, OK, July 31, Aug 31. Categories: Script. Formats: Screenplays only. Entry Fee: \$30 (30 Pgs or less); \$40 (31-59 pgs); \$50 (60 pgs or more). 31 (final) (2005), Festival, 401 W. Broadway, Ste. 308, Muskogee, USA 74401; (918) 391-1313, script2screenfest@yahoo.com; www.script2screenfilmfestival.com

BIG MINI DV FILM FESTIVAL

Nov. 10 and 11, 2006, Long Island University - Brooklyn Campus. Deadline: September 1, 2006. Festival recognizes the works of visual artists in mini-DV and HD-DV productions. Also assists independent film- and video-makers explore the advantages and benefits of working with mini-DVs. Categories: Animation, Experimental, Documentary (Short and Long), Narrative (Short). www.bigminidv.com.

HIGH FALLS FILM FESTIVAL

Nov. 13-18,

Rochester, NY - Deadline: TBA. Celebrating the work of women in film. Submitted works must be a maximum length of 20 minutes, including credits. Contact: ruthcowing@highfallsfilmfestival.com, 585. 258.0480.

IFP MARKET

Sept. 17-21, NY. Deadline: May 1: Rolling deadlines begin. Annual event is the longest-running U.S. market devoted to new, emerging film talent. The market presents new film & TV works in development directly to the industry. Hundreds of financiers, distributors, buyers, development execs, fest programmers, & agents from the U.S. & abroad attend the IFP Market. Market filmmakers receive access to these industry executives via targeted networking meetings, pitch sessions, screenings, & more. Cats: feature, doc, work-in-progress, short, script. Awards: More than \$150,000 in cash & prizes awarded to emerging artists, incl. two \$10,000 Gordon Parks Awards for Emerging African-American filmmakers. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DigiBeta, . Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry

Fee: \$40-\$50 application fee; Registration fees (paid on acceptance only): \$200 - \$450. Contact: Pooja Kohli; (212) 465-8200; fax: 465-8525; marketreg@ifp.org; www.ifp.org/market28.

THE INTERNATIONAL LATINO FILM FESTIVAL, November 3-19, 2006. San Francisco Bay Area. Late deadline: July 14. Festival promotes Latino culture by showcasing the best works produced by or about Latinos in the United States and internationally. Expresses the cultural diversity of the many countries and roots of the Latino population. Formats: 35mm, DVD. For review purposes, all entries must be submitted on DVD only. Please send three (3) copies of the film. Non-English-language entries must have English subtitles. www.latinofilmfestival.org/index_main.php.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL HOLLYWOOD, Nov. 1-6, 2006. North Hollywood, Los Angeles. Deadline: Aug 31, 2006. Festival gives student filmmakers from all over the world the opportunity to gain the recognition of film industry leaders, creating career development opportunities in their home countries and in the United States. Must be a student to enter! Fee: \$30. Contact: International Student Film Festival Hollywood, 5259 Lankershim Blvd. Suite A North Hollywood, California, U.S.A 91601. Phone: (818) 506-1066; OR (818) 203-4179 www.isffhollywood.org.

LOWER EAST SIDE FILM FESTIVAL- New York, NY. Deadline: Sept. 4, 2006. Third annual film festival featuring domestic and international film. Fees: \$20 (shorts), \$40 (feature films and docs). Contact: LESFF P.O. Box 1070 New York NY 10002 info@lowereastsidefilmfestival.org; www.lowereastsidefilmfestival.org.

MILWAUKEE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 19-29, WI. Deadline: TBA. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, Mini-DV, Beta SP. Entry Fee: \$10-\$70. Contact: Festival; (414) 225-9740; program@milwaukeeifest.org; www.milwaukeeifest.org.

NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL-From the NOFF website: "Unlike many film fests, we bring films to the New Orleans market that would not ordinarily be screened here. The fest also provides ovides mentoring sessions & industry panels for local filmmakers. In spite of our losses due to Hurricane Katrina, we are determined to resume programming in the near future. Our staff will continue to work w/out pay, & our board members are volunteering their time & efforts. We plan to present an abbreviated 2005 fest in early 2006, & w/ your help, we will present a full fest in the fall of 2006" See website to make a donation. Annual fest features premieres, classic film retros, panel discussions & gala events. Entries of all lengths & genres,

incl. music videos, welcome. Entries must be completed after Jan. of previous year. Founded: 1990. Cats: Any style or genre, Animation, Doc, Experimental, Short, Feature, Student, Music Video. Awards: Awards based on jury selection, given in each genre, Grand Jury Prize, & Louisiana Filmmaker Prize. Formats: 1/2", 35mm (by invitation only), Beta, 35mm, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40; \$45 (final). Contact: Elisa Gallinot; (504) 523-3818; fax: 782-5792; incompetition@neworleansfilmfest.com; www.neworleansfilmfest.com.

NEW HAMPSHIRE FILM EXPO Oct. 13-15 (2006) NH Deadline: July 31 (2006) NHFX is a community-inclusive event intended to enhance the arts and tourism aspects of NH. This is the state's largest film event, including: independent and student film screenings, tradeshow, young filmmaker's workshops and others. Categories: feature, doc, short, animation, student, any style or genre, script. Awards: Best: Feature, Drama Short, Comedy Short, Doc, Animation, Student. Formats: Beta SP, DVD, Mini-DV, VHS-NTSC, 1/2". Preview on VHS, Mini-DV or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20-\$45. NHFX, 497 Hooksett Road #2, PMB 324, Manchester, NH 03104-2650; (603) 647-NHFX (6439) info@nhfx.com; www.nhfx.com.

QUEENS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL -

Queens County, NY. November 16-19, 2006. By acting locally and thinking globally, the festival hopes to open the world to the cultural and artistic wealth of Queens and create a conduit of sharing with Queens and the world at large. Multiple categories, including docs, foreign, feature, comedy. Fee: according to category. Deadline: August 15, 2006. Contact: 65-61 Saunders Street, 8#P Rego Park, New York, USA 11374 Tel: 718-459-5496 www.queensfilmfestival.com/.

PORT TOWNSEND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 15-17, WA. Deadline: TBA/See Website. Festival aims to showcase independent filmmakers & films to provide creative activity for the public along w/ periodic classes & seminars. The emphasis is on providing a creative experience & promoting films. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Awards: Cash awards for Best Narrative Feature (\$2500), Best Doc Feature (\$2500), Best Short (\$750), Best Doc Short (\$750). Also Audience Favorite Award. Formats: S-VHS, Beta SP, 35mm. Preview on VHS (PAL, NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15-\$45. Contact: PTF, (360) 379-1333 ; fax: 379-3996; info@ptfilmfest.com; www.ptfilmfest.com.

RHODE ISLAND INTERNATIONAL HORROR FILM FESTIVAL, October 12-15, 2006. Deadlines: August 15/September 1. (late). Region's premiere and largest Horror Film Festival. Categories include horror, thrillers, documentary, etc. Filmmakers may enter their films either in/out of competition. Formats: 35mm, HiDef DVD & DVD. Preview on DVD. Entry Fee: \$40: shorts/features. (Add \$10 for late entries.) Contact: Rick Rebello Rhode Island International HORROR FILM FESTIVAL Box 162, Newport, RI 02840 (United States) Street: 96 Second Street, Newport, RI 02840 (401) 861-4445; fax: (401) 490-6735 info@film-festival.org; www.film-festival.org/enterafilm_horror.php.

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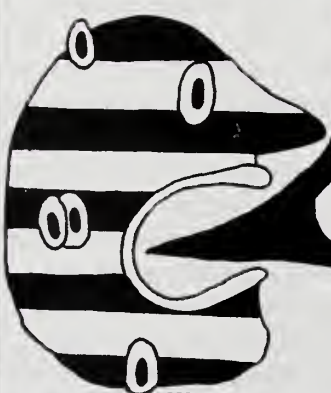
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and creative minds, bringing together outside filmmakers and artists already working in Santa Clarita Valley. Formats accepted for preview: DVD, VHS, or mini-DV (NTSC or PAL for all three). Formats for exhibition: DVD, VHS, or mini-DV. Contact: Santa Clarita Valley Film Festival_P.O. Box 1667_Santa Clarita, CA 91386 P/F (661) 251-0274 www.scvfilmfestival.com/index.htm.

SCREAMFEST HORROR FILM AND SCREENPLAY COMPETITION October 13-22 (2005) Aug. 15 (2005) Fest is a mix of films, sketch comedy, and contests for best costume and loudest shriek. Festivities take place at the Vogue Theatre in Hollywood. Categories: feature, short, animation, script. Entry Fee: features \$40, shorts \$30 and screenplays \$35. Rachel Belofsky, festival producer, 8840 Wilshire Blvd. Beverly Hills, CA 90211; (310) 358-3273; fax: 358-3272; screamfestla@aol.com www.screamfestla.com

DOMINICAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, November 6-11, 2006. Deadlines: Early Submission: July 17, 2006. Late submissions: August 14, 2006. Join thousands of filmmakers, industry executives, celebrities and film fans for six days of film, sun and fun at the tropical Sun Village Resort & Spa on Cofresi Beach and other local ven-

ues in the Dominican Republic. Submissions must be submitted in DVD format. Fees: Early: \$30 (shorts) \$40 (features); late: \$40 (shorts), \$50 (features). Contact: www.driff.org/.

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL AMSTERDAM, Nov. 23 - Dec. 3, 2006. Films made after 1 April 2006 will be accepted before August 10, 2006. The IDFA is an international venue for documentary film. Contact: IDFA Kleine-Gartmanplantsoen 10, 1017 RR Amsterdam, The Netherlands. www.idfa.nl/idfa_en.asp.

LONDON FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 18-Nov. 2 2006, London. Deadline: July 14, 2006 (features). Now in its 49th year, The Times bfi London Film Festival screens on average 280 films from 60 countries, presenting the very best of new film from the full spectrum of world cinema. Festival also features lectures, educational events, and industry and public forums. Formats: VHS (Pal, Secam or NTSC) and DVD (any region), Beta SP and DigiBeta (Pal or NTSC). Contact: London Film Festival National Film Theatre South Bank London SE1 8XT United Kingdom Tel +44 (0)20 7815 1322 Fax +44 (0)20 7633 0786 Email: Sarah.Lutton@bfi.org.uk.

PUSAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct

12-20 (2006) South Korea July 31 (2004) PIFF annually transforms the port city of Pusan into a vibrant film community, screening about 250 films from over 60 different countries. Film professionals from around the world recognize PIFF as a pathway to the global market for Asian films as well as a premier showcase of international cinema. Categories: feature, experimental, doc, animation, short. Formats: NTSC, PAL, 35mm, 16mm, Betacam, Digital Video, Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: PIFF, 3rd Floor, 1-143 Shinmunno2-Ga, Jongno-Gu, Seoul, South Korea 110-062 ; (011) 82-2-3675-5097; fax: 82-2-3675-5098; program@piff.org; www.piff.org.

THE RADAR FESTIVAL - Deadline for entries is August 31st 2006. This September The Radar Festival will be showcasing the hottest new talent in music video. New directors make new videos for established artists and the best will be screened at the Apple Theatre, Regent Street. New directors get the chance to win professional commissions with labels like Domino, Warp and Tummy Touch, to get taken on by the fabulous production company Colonel Blimp or just to enter to win cash and bask in public glory. All entries welcome, all ages, shapes and sizes. Can't wait to see what you make. www.radarfestival.com.

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Contact: (212) 807-1400, x241; fax: (212) 463-8519; classifieds@nyc.rr.com; per issue cost: 0-240 characters (incl. spaces & punctuation): \$45 for nonmembers/\$30 for A/VF members; 241-360 chars: \$65/\$45; 361-480 chars: \$80/\$60; 481-600 chars: \$95/\$75; over 600 characters: Call for quote. (212) 807-1400, x241. Frequency discount: \$5 off per issue for ads running 5+ times. Ads exceeding the specified length will be edited.
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By Marshall Crook

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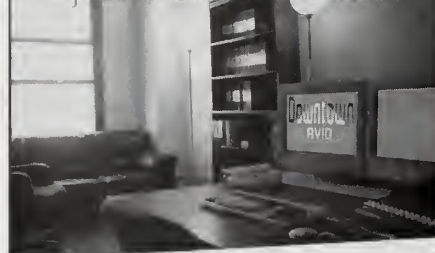


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clear. Kathryn Roake has drawn over 15 films, one the winner of a New Line Cinema grant, another, the winner of an HBO grant. I work on union and non union films. Kathryn 718-788-2755.

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CAREER AND SCRIPT CONSULTANT Emmy nominated Ellen Sandler (Co-Executive Producer "Everybody Loves Raymond") can help anyone avoid costly, time consuming pitfalls and dead ends in the Hollywood game. She works one on one with you on pitching skills, script re-writes, career strategies, including networking and relocating to Los Angeles. Her approach follows specific guidelines and proven techniques, but is always customized to the specific needs, strengths and budget of each client. Email: elsand@comcast.net for more information and to request a sample consultation at no charge.

GET YOUR SCREENPLAY READY FOR PRODUCTION! Former Miramax story analyst, School of Visual Arts professor and author of Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters (Hyperion, August 2002), will analyze your screenplay and write you constructive in-depth studio style notes. I will go right to the heart of what works in your script and what needs improvement as well as offering suggestions about HOW to fix it. Trust me, I'm not looking for "formulas." Every screenplay is different. Since I'm an independent filmmaker, I specialize in helping filmmakers get their scripts ready for shooting. Face it. You're going to spend a lot of money to make your film. Spend a little up front to make sure your script works. It's the ONLY way to pull off a low budget film effectively! It will cost you 1000 times more to fix script problems AFTER the production begins. Reasonable rates, references. Michael Tierno, mtierno@nyc.rr.com.

GO PICTURES is an indie production company based in NYC. At GO Pictures we seek to collaborate on challenging projects with the undeterred film or video maker. Our goal is to find "the little engine that could." With a combined 20 years in the industry, GO Pictures can help you take your idea from concept to screen. We offer free project evaluation for all comers and we highly encourage first timers to take us up on this offer. For

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WEB

WEB SITE DESIGNER: Create multimedia web sites, integrating video, sound, and special effects, that promote your films and/or your company. Info: Sabine Probst, phone: 646-226-7881, sabine@spromo.net, www.sabineprobstdesign.com.

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By Marshall Crook

COMPETITIONS

HOLLYWOOD GATEWAY SCREENWRITING CONTEST:

The mission of the Hollywood Gateway Screenwriting Contest is to guide aspiring writers to their success through opportunity, mentoring and unparalleled access to Hollywood decision makers. \$5,000 Cash prize and an initial 12-month option agreement against a potential \$100,000 purchase price, among other prizes. Contest Deadline July 31th, 2006 - Entry Cost \$40.00 Late Entry August 31, 2006 - Entry Cost \$50.00. Type of Material: Screenplays 80-140 pages. International entries written in English are welcome. For more information go to www.hollywoodgateway.com/details.php.

THE SHOOT IT INDEPENDENT! PRODUCTION FUND-

submissions deadline: 1st August, 2006. Accepting applications for annual screenplay competition. Awards given by the production fund provide training, guidance, industry consultation and preparation to become a stronger filmmaker. **AWARDS** The winning proposal will receive: A \$5,000 production award to aid in production of the a short screenplay EP Budgeting and Scheduling software package Training Courses from The Writers Bootcamp for the second place winner Final Draft Software Packages to the second and third place winners For details:

www.shootitindie.net.

PURA INSPIRACIÓN FILM CONTEST seeks diverse documentary and narrative films celebrating the good in our world and everyday heroes. Special award for filmmaker who best incorporates cultural heritage and traditions into film. Semi-finalists screened at Puro Mexicano : Tucson Film Festival, November 5, 2006. Entry fee: (films up to 10 minutes) \$20. Deadline: October 2, 2006. For information, contact: info@reelinspiration.org or visit: www.reelinspiration.org, or www.tucsonfilmfestival.org.

CONFERENCES WORKSHOPS

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TELEVISION

PROGRAM EXECUTIVES is producing the 3rd Annual TV Producers' Boot Camp, July 27-28, 2006, in West Hollywood. The TV Producers' Boot Camp is an interactive, one and a half day event with the goal of providing "inside information" on how the TV industry really works. Through panels, sessions and workshops as well as the Boot Camp Pitch Pit, where participants get face time with agents and production executives, attendees get real access to real pros in real time! If you have any questions, please visit NATPE website at www.natpe.org or contact Pamela Silverman at (310) 453-4440.

RAW WORD READINGS, a monthly readings series seeks 10-page excerpts from original screenplays. Up-and-coming actors perform 10 pages of work by up-and-coming screenwriters at Galapagos Art Space in Brooklyn, and Rock Candy (performance space) in NY Once a month. Please submit your pdf or word file, 10 compelling pages of material (include the title in the filename) for consideration to rawwordreadings@yahoo.com.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS: offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Nonprofit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made. Contact: (212) 319-2910 x. 9.

24TH STREET WRITERS GROUP seeking new

members - Monday Nights. Well established Manhattan based screen writing group is seeking committed new members for Monday evening meetings. If interested in being considered for membership, please send a 30 page writing sample in PDF format to the24thstreetwriters@aol.com.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP - Film Forum is accepting applications for fiscal sponsorship from filmmakers. Film Forum retains 5% of all funds received on a project's behalf from foundations, corporations and individuals. To apply, email a cover letter, project description, bios of project leaders and proposed project budget to Dominick Balletta at dominick@filmforum.org. Dominick Balletta/ General Manager/ FILM FORUM/ 209 West Houston Street/ NYC 10014/ 212.627.2035.

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues, especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: To Challenge Stereotypes - We support the creation of art that reflects the full diversity and complexity of women's lives. To Increase Opportunities - We advocate for women artists to be paid fairly and to have more opportunities to make a living from their creative work. To learn more about our work, and to sign up to receive these funding newsletters, visit our web page at: www.WomenArts.org.

HUMANITIES WASHINGTON administers a pooled fund to support documentary filmmaking. Grant awards range from \$1,500 to \$8,000. Any public agency or nonprofit organization located in Washington state is eligible to apply for a documentary grant. Individual film makers must contract with a nonprofit sponsoring organization. The film subject need not be specific to Washington state, as long as the filmmaker lives in the state. Filmmakers from other states may apply if their films have

a direct connection or relevance to the state, and if they find an organization in the state that agrees to sponsor them. Deadline for Proposals: The 2005 Documentary Grant deadline is August 4, 2006. Letter of Intent is due July 7, 2006. Visit www.humanities.org/grants/media-grants.php for more information or email Margaret Ann Bollmeier at mab@humanities.org.

IFP MARKET Are you seeking financing or a producer for your script? Completion funds or distribution for your documentary? Looking to expand your contact list? The IFP Market is a great place to begin: the only selective forum in the US to introduce new work to an industry-only audience of sales companies, fest programmers, distributors, broadcasters, producers and agents from the US and abroad. Rolling deadlines begin May 1. Application fees and Attendance fee upon acceptance as well as other details can be found online at www.ifp.org starting March 1. For more details call 212-465-8200 x 222 or email marketreg@ifp.org.

THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION, which supports individual women artists, arts programs, and arts organizations in the Greater Philadelphia region, has announced the Art and Change Grants provide immediate, short-term grants of up to \$2,500 to women artists in the Philadelphia region who need financial assistance to take advantage of opportunities for art and change. The artist's opportunity for change must be supported by or be in collaboration with a Change Partner — a person, organization, or business that is providing the opportunity or is a part of the opportunity in some way. Eligible Change Partners include mentors, editors, galleries, community art spaces, theaters, nonprofit organizations, film studios, and clubs. (Art and Change Grant Deadlines: April 11, June 20, and October 31, 2006.) Visit the Leeway Foundation Web site for grant-making guidelines and application forms.

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ent projects each year. Subject must be compelling & of interest to KQED's viewers, or attract new audiences. Material must pass technical evaluation for broadcast quality. Producer must supply rough cut for review. KQED also takes on a number of co-productions each year. For more info, call (415) 553-2859 or www.kqed.org/tv/indieproducers/

SCHOLARSHIP FUND for Women Filmmakers \$20,000 scholarship offered by Muse Media. San Francisco Women's Film Festival forms relationship with Muse Media to support women filmmakers to complete their films. For more information about how to qualify for the scholarship contact: scholarship@womensfilm-festival.us, visit the SFWFF website at womensfilmfestival.us.

THE TEXAS FILMMAKERS' PRODUCTION FUND is an annual grant awarded to emerging film and video artists in the state of Texas. Funded through revenues from benefit film premieres and private and corporate donations, the TFPF is our effort to redress the loss of public funds for filmmakers. www.austinfilm.org/tfpf/.

MICROCINEMAS SCREENINGS

911 MEDIA ARTS CENTER was incorporated in 1984 and is considered Washington State's premier Media Arts Center. 911 screenings are booked quarterly. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Quarterly deadlines are as follows: Spring -> Last day of February. Summer -> Last day of May. Fall -> Last day of August. Winter -> Last day of November. Submission Address: Screenings Committee /911 Media Arts Center / 402 9th Ave N. / Seattle, WA 98109 / (206) 682-6552 / info@911media.org.

FILM AND VIDEO 825 - Series of bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. In a city dominated by Hollywood, venues such as ours become a necessity for artists working in time-based media that is outside the mainstream of narrative cinema. Our curatorial

vision is open to both shorts and features in experimental, performance, animation, and documentary forms. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652-8272, F: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html.

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Tuesdays at 2:00 PM on Channel 20
Become part of current media making history and submit your media work to be shown on TV, on our legendary public access cable show. Commercial free, 100% media art TV. Provide us with mini-dv, vhs, svhs, or 8mm video (ntsc) tapes with a running time of 28 min. or less. Your work may also be displayed in our storefront window. Your entry will become a part of our Member Viewing Library unless you include an SASE. Axlegrease is open to local and international artists. Send tapes Attention: Axlegrease. Formats accepted: mini-dv, s-vhs, vhs or dvd. Please visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.

GET YOUR FILM SHOWN ON SKY! Propeller TV is the new national channel for film and television talent, to launch in the new year on SKY. The Film First strand of the channel is looking for short films to be considered for broadcast. They can be any length and genre. You don't have to be Spielberg to be considered for the channel, you could be an independent filmmaker or even a community-based group. Please send films on DVD for broadcast consideration to: John Offord, Propeller TV, c/o Screen Yorkshire, 46 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7EY john@propellertv.co.uk (0) 7724 243680.

THE SHORT LIST. Weekly, half-hour international short film series on PBS and Cox Cable now licensing for 14th season. Considers shorts 30 secs. to 20 mins (fiction, animation, documentary). Send DVD screener with application form downloaded from www.theshortlist.cc.

Magnolia Independent Film Festival

Feb. 15, 16, & 17, 2007 - Starkville, MS

Our 10th annual "Mag" welcomes all genres, all lengths, in competition for awards. The "Mag" was founded by Ron Tibbett to celebrate his vision of Independent film in Mississippi. It has been called the most filmmaker friendly festival by many of our past contributors. Entry fees are \$25 feature, \$15 shorts and \$10 student film. We are proud partners with Rhode Island International Film Festival, Tupelo Film Festival, Crossroads Film Festival and Indie Memphis.



We look forward to seeing you down in the deep South!

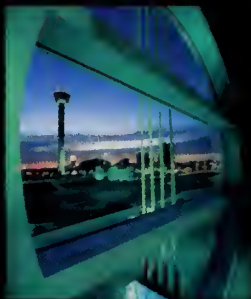
Entry Forms: Download at www.magfilmfest.com

or write to: Festival Director

2269 Waverly Drive
West Point, MS 39773

Phone: (662) 494-5836

Fax: (662) 494-9900



Contact us for a free San Antonio Film Guide.

Drew Mayer-Oakes
Film Marketing Manager
210.207.6730
Drew@FilmSanAntonio.com
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Work Wanted

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notice@iavf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVE. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

By Marshall Crook

AMAZEFILMS is constantly looking for feature films and short films to include in its programming. We welcome filmmakers and writers to send us their work for consideration free of charge. If you feel that your short film, feature film or documentary film that you have produced would make a good addition to the AmazeFilms programming, please fill out the film submission form: www.amazefilms.com/submissions.

BIG FILM SHORTS is a film distribution company that specializes in short films, as well as other media and formats. We serve both as sales agents for filmmakers with whom we have contracts and as consultants for film bookers and programmers, drawing on the films in our catalog as well as films we select from third-party sources. The core of our business is our film library, which contains shorts in a variety of genres, lengths, formats and national origins. A great many of our films were popular favorites and award winners at Sundance, Telluride, Cannes and other leading film festivals in the United States and around the world.

COMEDY EXPRESS TV seeks funny films

under 7 min. to show and promote on television. Please look at our website www.comedyexpresstv.com which gives more background as well as the online release which MUST accompany all submissions. Contact: Adam Gilad 9229 Sunset Blvd LA CA 90069 adamgilad@mac.com; 310 271 0023.

FOOTAGE REQUEST The annual Avid Show Reel features clips from the most innovative commercials, documentaries, music videos, feature films, television programs, and more from around the globe. And all created with Avid editing systems and/or Softimage animation software. It's a great, free way to get valuable exposure throughout the year—from NAB in Las Vegas to IBC in Amsterdam. For details, see www.avid.com/footage/.

GLOBAL VILLAGE STOCK FOOTAGE If you are a producer owning the rights to high quality betacam footage that may be of interest to other producers, we will add your material to our database at no charge to you. We will pay 50% of the royalties we collect for the licensing of your footage. In most cases we need to have first generation copies or field masters at our facility to ensure rapid delivery to clients. We also prefer footage or programs that are logged by computer so we can readily add the footage descriptions to our database. For more information send us an instant E-mail or call: 1.800.798-FIND or 1.707.823-1451 or fax us at 1.707.829-9542.

GOOGLE VIDEO UPLOAD PROGRAM is accepting digital video files of any length and size. Simply sign up for an account and upload your videos using our Video Uploader (you must own the rights to the works you upload), and, pending our approval process and the launch of this new service, we'll include your video in Google Video, where users will be able to search, preview, purchase and play it. <https://upload.video.google.com/>.

INDIAVIDFEST - from creators of digital media-submissions deadline 28 July IndiaVIDFEST.com is an internet portal

where aspiring media and movie producers can showcase their talent, gain recognition, and compete to win worthwhile prizes for their efforts. IndiaVIDFEST.com is a joint undertaking between Bidchaser Inc. of Orlando, FL, Endavo, Inc. of Utah, FL, TIMMS Consultancy, of Mumbai, India and Indiainfobridge, of Pune, India. In case of any queries contact yash~at~bidchaser.com Cell No 9120- 9371066737 www.indiavidfest.com

THE MOUNTAIN FUND at www.mountainfund.org is looking for works that educate about issues affecting people in mountainous regions of the world. We want to add such content to our site to educate our visitors. If you are willing to have your works on our site. Please contact us.

NATURAL HEROES is a Public Television series featuring independently produced films and videos. We're searching for compelling stories that feature people challenging current environmental standards and conditions. Accepted works will be packaged for broadcast and distributed to Public Television stations across the country. There are no fees, contracts are non-exclusive, and any viewers interested in purchasing your film would be sent directly to you. Download the Submission Form and Call for Entries from www.naturalheroesstv.org Questions? Email naturalheroes@krcc.org or phone 707-585-8522 x124 .

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TV is looking for strong, original, quality educational and artistic programming for 2006. Submissions are welcomed from across the globe— from production companies, community organizations, NGOs, filmmakers, students and artists— from November 2005 through April 2006 in the following categories : Conflicts and Rights, Caring for the elderly, the sick, the disabled, and Street Arts. Films must have been completed after 1/1/98 and can be from 10 to 90 min. long. For details and submission form For submission form and further information go to www.udc.edu/cable_tv_19/about_cable19.htm or contact devansprichard@udc.edu.

THANK YOU

None of AIVF's work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:



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We'd like to extend a special appreciation to the following patrons who donated more than \$500.

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"The significance of the features by black directors at this year's [Sundance] was enhanced by their number (one or two wouldn't have had the same impact), the variety, the quality, and the prizes they won. The message seemed clear: independent black feature filmmakers have achieved critical mass."

—Peter Broderick, 1991

"From 1863 to 1910, there were 17,600 short films released in the USA. In 1992, the professional short film is nearly non-existent, and the number of companies producing or acquiring shorts for commercial release can be counted on a few fingers."

—Eileen Wilkinson, 1992

"On September 1, the Bravo Cable Network will launch the Independent Film Channel...[T]he need for a separate channel became apparent five years ago when...two days before Jean-Luc Godard's *Hail Mary* was scheduled to be broadcast, [Bravo] underwent a vicious attack from the radical right, which included hostile picketers, bomb threats, and anonymous callers asking for home addresses."

—Jennie Lanouette, 1994

"We were like little piranhas nipping at it with our cameras."

—Richard Linklater on the freedom of filming a scene with a handheld digital camera, Jan/Feb 2002

"The importance of *Primary* still hasn't been understood. The fact that there are no interviews is staggering in a film of that sort. There are no people talking to cameras. It's unbelievable. That still hasn't been understood by the industry or television at all."

—Richard Leacock, 1996

"Exhibitors say there's a trend to designate a single screen in a big multiplex as the 'art screen.' In some cities, an entire 4- or 6-plex can be devoted to showing 'specialty films.'"

—Dan Mirvish, 1997

"The small gauge has a unique, inimitable palette and texture. Even so, Kodak moved to discontinue production of Super 8 sound cartridges and many print stocks a few years ago. This has put Super 8 filmmaking on the endangered species list."

—Donna Cameron, 1998

"This is the first time distributing short films has actually been viable. VHS doesn't work, the Internet is too slow, and CD-ROM only stores a few minutes of decent video. DVD can get filmmakers' work seen and launch their careers."

—Scott Epstein, 1999

Voices from Issues Past

"I used to be able to pitch a project verbally. But now I go out and shoot a little bit. I edit on the way home in the plane with Final Cut Pro 2 on my G4, and I have a demo to show when I land...having already shot something puts me far ahead of the game."

—Joe Berlinger, October 2001

"In my case, digital video has allowed me to shoot in a different way than I have before, if only for the simple reason that you can shoot for an hour at a time or even longer. While it may seem like a subtle change, it has certainly been a significant one."

—Errol Morris, October 2001

"Norman Mailer's proverbial 'shit storm' hit the arts community when the GOP electorally massacred the Democratic party, taking control of Congress for the first time in 40 years. The question posed by supporters of the NEW and public broadcasting was not whether the two institutions would be affected, but just how severely."

—Christopher Borrelli, 1995

"Prior to Netflix, you were dependent on this perfect storm of circumstances for anyone to see your film. They had to know about it, be free to go see it on the night it was playing, to have the cash, to not flake out. Now, all we need is someone who says 'I want to see that movie.'"

—Katy Chevigny, filmmaker, September 2005

SAGINDIE

SCREEN ACTORS GUILD

"They loved the pitch!
They just want to know who's
gonna play the cantankerous
former basketball star who
conquers his inner demons
by coaching a rag-tag bunch
of tween girls to the
state championship."

10 Tips for Modern Actors

1. Be professional.
2. Be on time.
3. Be prepared.
4. Be flexible.
5. Be a team player.
6. Be a good listener.
7. Be a good communicator.
8. Be a good actor.
9. Be a good person.
10. Be a good friend.

You're searching for a great actor.

There are over 100,000 SAG members searching for great roles.

Let us help you find each other.

To learn more about how the Screen Actors Guild has made it easier
than ever for independent filmmakers to work with professional actors, visit

www.sagindie.org

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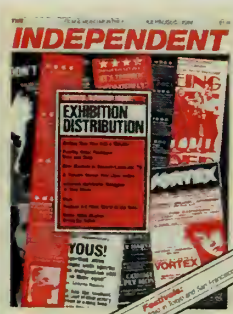


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Independent
Video Monthly Spring



Independent
FALL/WINTER 1978



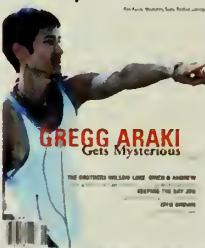
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